DIA

T.S. Eliot

I am an N phone ta my room

T.S. Eliot

was I once under surveillance and am I now responsible for the bugging equipment?"

"Surely . . ." said Humphrey evasively, and how well I recognise the tactics by now! "Surely you don't believe what you read in that squalid little rag?"

("Squalid little rag" was clearly Whitehall general slang usage for Private Eye at about this time — Ed.)

I asked him again. Was it accurate?

Sir Humphrey again declined to give a straight answer. "I don't think we should take it too seriously, minister," he replied suavely.

I saw red. I told him that I regard this as an outrageous

"Gets them?" I shrieked. "You mean it's still going on?"

He tried to pacify me, but without success. "No, minister, not you, not now. Now he will be getting reports on current members of Her Majesty's Opposition."

The mechanics were still unclear to me. "Who gives these reports to the home secretary?" I demanded.

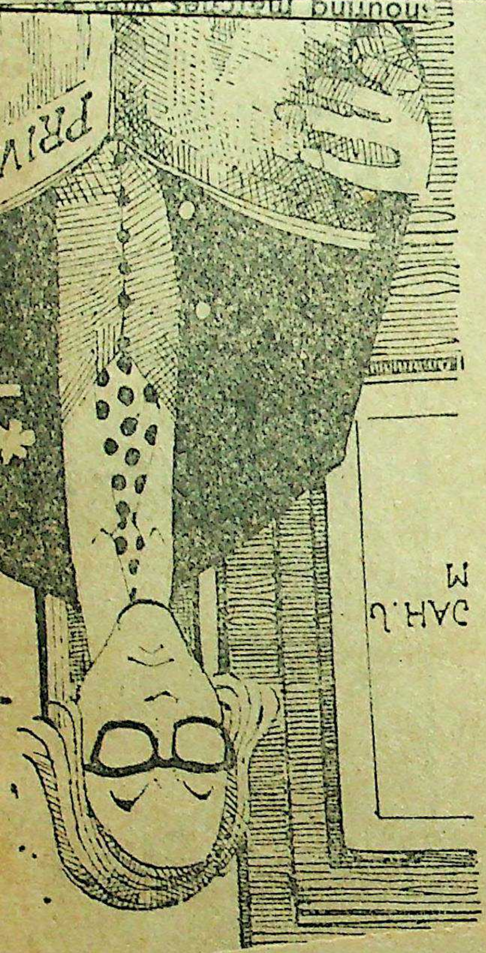
He shrugged. "MI5, presumably."

"You seem very calm about all this."

He smiled. He was really getting right up my nose, the complacent . . . (expletive deleted — Ed.)

I certainly wasn't calm about

- in my case, a distinguished British
rveillance ! — my phone tapped ! —
the service of his fellow countr
, faceless bureaucrats are liste
ivate calls. My rows with my wife.



RAJA RAO

KANTHAPURA

By the Same Author :

T.S. ELIOT :

1. *The 'Waste Land' and Other Poems*
2. *The Critic*
3. *Murder in the Cathedral*
4. *The Cocktail Party*
5. *The Family Reunion*

BERNARD SHAW :

6. *Man and Superman*
7. *Arms and the Man*
8. *Saint Joan*
9. *Candida*
10. *Major Barbara*

GEORGE ELIOT :

11. *Middlemarch*
12. *Mill on the Floss*
13. *Adam Bede*

ARISTOTLE :

14. *The Poetics*

COLERIDGE :

15. *Biographia Literaria*

WORDSWORTH :

16. *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*

DRYDEN :

17. *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*

SIDNEY :

18. *An Apology for Poetry*

JOHN WEBSTER :

19. *Duchess of Malfi*

VIRGINIA WOOLF :

20. *To The Lighthouse*
21. *Mrs Dalloway*

W.M. THACKERAY :

22. *Vanity Fair*

JOSEPH CONRAD :

23. *Lord Jim*

ROBERT BROWNING :

24. *Select Poems, Vol. I*
25. *Select Poems, Vol. II*

ALFRED TENNYSON :

26. *Select Poems*

W.H. AUDEN :

27. *Select Poems*
28. *Ascent of F-6*

JOHN DONNE :

29. *Select Poems*

JOHN MILTON :

30. *Minor Poems*

MATTHEW ARNOLD :

31. *Essays in Criticism*

SHAKESPEARE :

32. *Much Ado About Nothing*
33. *Henry IV, Part I* (*Text with Annotations*)
34. *Henry IV, Part I* (*A Critical Study*)
35. *Richard II*

ROBERT FROST :

36. *Select Poems*

WALT WHITMAN :

37. *Select Poems*

EUGENE O'NEILL :

38. *The Hairy Ape*
39. *Desire Under the Elms*
40. *The Iceman Cometh*

R.K. NARAYAN :

41. *The Guide*

TAGORE :

42. *Gitanjali*

RAJA RAO :

43. *Kanthapura*
44. *The Serpent and the Rope*

KAMALA MARKANDAYA :

45. *Nectar in a Sieve*

MULK RAJ ANAND :

46. *Coolie*
47. *Untouchable*

SAROJINI NAIDU :

48. *Select Poems*
49. SRI AUROBINDO
50. *New Indian English Poets & Poetry*
51. *History and Principles of Literary Criticism*
52. *New Criticism and New Critics*
53. *English Literature : Background and Forms*

DYLAN THOMAS :

54. *Select Poems*
55. **New-Pattern English Grammar and Composition**

RAJA RAO

KANTHAPURA

[*A Critical Study*]

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Department of English
Meerut College
MEERUT

THIRD EDITION
1982

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

It is always a matter of great pleasure for an author to find that his book has been useful to those for whom it is meant. That a third edition has been needed within so short a time is ample evidence of its popularity and usefulness.

For the present edition the book has been thoroughly revised in the light of experience gained since the publication of the previous edition, and the suggestions for improvement received both from teachers and students. In this way, every possible effort has been made to increase the usefulness of the work for the student community.

I am grateful to all those patrons, friends and well-wishers who have sent to me their valuable suggestions from time to time for the improvement of the book. Further suggestions in this connection are invited for incorporation in the next edition.

Meerut
June, 1982

—Raghukul Tilak

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is a classic of Indo-Anglian fiction and it has received international recognition. It has been called, "a veritable Grammar of the Gandhian myth", and it is hoped it will always have a central place in Gandhian literature. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that this masterpiece of a great son of mother India is now being taught in most of the universities of the country.

There is no dearth of criticism on *Kanthapura* but, by and large, full justice has not been done to the art of Raja Rao as examplified by this great classic. The present work studies his art with simplicity and clarity, and all complexity and intricacy have been painstakingly avoided.

The emphasis throughout has been on clarification and evaluation. To facilitate further the task of the examinees, often hard pressed for time, the relevant critical material has been presented in a lucid and simple manner. While the treatment is comprehensive and elaborate, it in no way precludes a study of the original text which is essential for a proper and genuine understanding.

Long quotations have been eschewed as far as possible. Textual problems have been fully dealt with in the light of the questions generally set by various universities. A list of books consulted and drawn upon is appended at the end. In should serve as a guide to further reading.

I am grateful to the publishers, for the keen interest they have taken, and the co-operation they have extended to me, in making the book up-to date.

Meerut, 1979 —**Raghukul Tilak**

CONTENTS

1. Introductory 1
2. The Literary Background : Survey of Indo-Anglian Literature 9
3. Raja Rao : Man and Writer 22
4. The Novels of Raja Rao 25
5. Short Stories of Raja Rao 32
6. A General Estimate of Raja Rao as a Novelist

Or

Raja Rao : His Merits and Demerits—His Contribution and Achievement 39
7. "Kanthapura" : The Historical Background 55
8. Preface to "Kanthapura" : Its Significance 60

9. Characters in the Novel

(1) Moorthy, The Village Gandhi 64
(2) Ratna, The Progressive Widow 67
(3) Patel Range Gowda, the Tiger of the Village 68
(4) Bhatta, the First Brahmin 70
(5) Bade Khan, the Policeman 72
(6) The White Owner of Skeffington Coffee Estate 73
(7) The Swami 74
(8) Advocate Sankar 74
(9) Waterfall Venkamma 75
(10) Narsamma 75
(11) Rangamma 76

10. Critical Review of the Novel

(1) Its Publication 77
(2) The Significance of the Title

Or

'Kanthapura' as the hero of the novel

Or

The Presentation of life in an Indian village in the Novel 78

(3) Raja Rao's use of the mythical technique

Or

"Kanthapura" as a Gandhi-epic (Gandhiad) or Gandhi-Purana

Or

In Kanthapura "the political revolution is transcended and assimilated into the racial heritage as myth and legend". 81

(4) The element of Poetry, Fantasy and Lyricism

Or

Fusion of poetry, science and politics in the novel 83

(5) The Theme of the Novel—Gandhi and our Village

Or

The Gandhi Movement and Its Impact

Or

The presentation of Gandhian freedom struggle in the Novel

Or

" 'Kanthapura' is not a mere political or thesis novel, but a great work of art" 86

(6) Raja Rao's rendering of Indian sensibility

Or

The Indianness of "Kanthapura"

Or

"Kanthapura" is Indian both in theme and treatment 90

(7) Art of Characterisation

Or

"Kanthapura" as a portrait-gallery 94

(8) Art and technique of narration 97

(9) Plot and structure : Formlessness 102

(10) The style—Raja Rao's English 106

(11) "Kanthapura" as a Sthala-Purana or regional novel 111

11. Detailed, Chapter-wise Summary with Critical Comments 116

12. Suggested Readings 151

1

Introductory

The Term "Indo-Anglian" : Its Significance

The term "Indo-Anglian" is used to denote original literary creation in the English language by Indians. Today there are a large number of educated Indians who use the English language as a medium of the creative exploration and expression of their experience of life. Their writing has now developed into substantial literature in its own right and it is this substantial body of literature which is referred to as Indo-Anglian literature. As **C.R. Reddy** in his foreword to Srinivasa Iyengar's work *Indo-Anglian Literature* points out, "Indo-Anglian literature is not essentially different in kind from Indian literature. It is part of it, a modern facet of that glory which, commencing from *the Vedas*, has continued to spread its mellow light, now with greater and now with lesser brilliance under the inexorable vicissitudes of time and history ever increasingly upto the present time of Tagore, Iqbal and Aurobindo Ghosh, and bids fair to expand with our, as well as humanity's expanding future."

Distinguished from Anglo-Indian Literature

This Indo-Anglian literature is to be distinguished from 'Anglo-Indian literature'. *The term 'Anglo-Indian Literature' is used to denote the writing of English men in English about India and Indian life.* Thus Rudyard Kipling is an Anglo-Indian writer. Their works are also significant as they serve to interpret India to the west. However, their presentation of Indian life is often romantic rather than realistic. India is presented as a land of Snake-charmers, Jugglers and Rajas and Maharajas, and one great value of 'Indo-Anglian literature' is that it serves to correct this picture and project a more favourable and truthful image of India.

Distinguished from Indo-English Literature

There is another term "Indo-English Literature" which is used to denote translations into English from literature in Indian *languages.* This 'Indo-English literature' has been further distinguished into '*classical*' *Indo-English literature*, and '*Modern*' *Indo-English literature* by scholars like **Prof Gokak** on the basis whether the translation is of an ancient or of a modern work. Such a distinction is necessary because the translator's function is quite different in either case. The former requires a certain degree of interpretation and adaptation of meaning to accommodate which some latitude in translation becomes inevitable. As long as adequate editorial explanation and documentation accompanies the rendering, the translation will be in no danger of misleading his reader into thinking that the rendering is literal. Absolutely literal translation in any case, is impossible in literature whether of ancient works or of modern ; but the degree of literalness decreases in inverse proportion to the distance in time between the original composition and the translation. Some allowance has also to be made for prevailing literary taste and scruples at the time when the translation takes place. Similarly, some freedom may be claimed by the translator of such works when he has a definite audience in mind. An extreme example of the liberty claimed by a translator of ancient texts may be seen in the practice of **P. Lal**, whose principal aim seems to be maximum readability within the confines of faithful rendering. Sanskritists may disapprove of such an aim, but classical texts are surely capable of withstanding honestly intended interpretation, and Mr. Lal's practice mingles translation with large measures of interpretation in his endeavour to modernize an ancient text. It is the duty as well as the privilege of every generation to attempt to come to terms in its own way with classical literature. This is where 'Classical' Indo-English literature is worthy of scholarly undertaking and should be developed as a separate discipline of study at post-graduate level.

The translation of 'Modern' Indo-English literature is governed utterly by different conditions. "In some ways, the translator's task here is much simpler because fidelity to the original must be his primary and steadfast aim, making allowances only for the unavoidable lexical or linguistic, cultural or environmental adjustments with the original. He cannot indulge in any of the liberties permissible to the translator of classical texts, because he is not separated in time and space from the original author as the other kind of translator is." The translation of poetry will always require some imaginative alterations in translation, but these should be kept down to a minimum if the translation is to justify itself. With prose, this margin should not be necessary. "Even if the translator of modern literature cannot be as neutral to his subject as, say, a United Nations interpreter, the minimal interposition of the translator's presence between the reader and the original author should be the translator's dearest ambition." **(Sujit Mukerjee)**

It should also be noted that "Indo-English literature" reverses the basic principle that the language of translation should be the translator's own first language. Indo-English literature consists of translations from the 'mother tougue' into English which is rarely the first language of an Indian. Hence in making such translations the translator must see to it that his language is not only grammatically accurate, but also has idiomatic accuracy of a high degree.

The Indo-English literature has its own significance since in this way literary classics in regional languages become available to those who do not know those languages, both in India and abroad. Indian literature should be available in English because even today the English language continues to be a living link between those who read and write literature in different regions of India and speak different languages. However, small the actual number of persons involved, however small this number as a percentage of the total literate population of India, a trans-Indian readership continues to be a reality only in the English language. Until such time, when some one Indian language is acceptable all over the country, it is only expedient that we should exploit a history-given advantage by rendering into English all the outstanding works of modern literature in all Indian languages, as quickly and as competently as possible.

Distinguished from Transcreations

There is still another category of translations in the English language, to which the term *transcreation* rather than 'translation' is applied. These are the translations into English made by an author of his own works in his mother tongue. The original is not closely followed, but is considerably altered and improved in the process of translation, so that it becomes almost a different work. It is, therefore, *transcreation* and not 'translation' proper which implies a measure of faithful adherence to the original. Tagore's *Gitanjali* (as well as his other translations) is the only outstanding work of such 'transcreation' on the part of an Indian writer in English. Says **Paul Verghese** in this connection, "Tagore made a phenomenal impact on every regional literature in India and that no other Indian writer in the recent present or the distant past 'has ever attained the unique distinction of being the inspirer and moulder of a whole nation's literature'. This influence of Tagore on the literatures all over India became possible because of the translations of his works are mostly free renderings and are, therefore, not exact translations of the originals. They are 'transcreations' or something inbetween translation and creation : for Tagore took liberties with the originals and rewrote them in English rather than attempting a literal translation. He made occasional changes in the original. Sometimes two or three original poems were combined into one. The reverse process of splitting a single poem in the original into two was also followed. Whether or not Tagore's method of translation has marred the beauty of the original is not our present concern. But the question is whether Tagore's own translations, be they better or worse than the originals, qualify for treatment as English works by an Indian writer and whether their quality can be assessed accordingly. From the method of translation followd by Tagore and the fact that perhaps he is the only writer in the world who has rendered his own works into English to attract the attention of the world to himself so as to win the *Nobel Prize for Literature*, we can legitimately say that the works translated by him form part of Indian-writing in English."

Indo-Anglian Writing : Its Abundance

The above discussion clearly establishes Indo-Anglian writing as a separate *genre*, as distinguished from Anglo-Indian writing and 'Indo-English Writing'. This way of writing has been enriched by such internationally recognised figures as *Toru Dutt*, *Sarojini Naidu*, *Tagore*, *Jawahar Lal*, *Aurobindo Ghosh* and *Mahatma Gandhi*. Today a number of eminent Indians such as *R.K. Narayan*, *Mulk Raj Anand*, *Raja Rao* continue to write in English, and Indo-Anglian literature continues to grow and flourish, and attain higher and higher peaks of excellence.

Difficulties and Problems

(1) **Language** : And all this success has been achieved despite the overwhelming difficulties which the Indian writers in English have always faced, and which they continue to face even to-day. First, there has been the difficulty of the medium of expression. The Indian writer in English must be able to use his chosen medium with a fair degree of accuracy both of grammer and idiom. As **Raja Rao** in his *Preface* to his novel *Kanthapura* says, English is not a 'foreign tongue' in India, but it is only the language of our intellectual make-up, not of our "emotional make-up". He rightly suggests that the Indian writer in English must express 'Indian sensibility' and with this end in view he should learn to write 'Indian English' and not Babu English, *i.e.* the English of Oxford and Cambridge educated Englishmen. *The Indianness of English consists not in the sprinkling of Indian vocabulary, though it is there, but in the manner in which they dislocate the conventional syntax to approximate to the patterns and rhythms of Punjabi, Kannada or Tamil speech, in the attempt, to catch the very tone of voice, the gesture of hand and the twinkle in the eye of the men and women who figure in the work of art.* Such Indian English must be used to express Indian sensibility, *i.e.* to convey the 'feel' of the cultural and emotional life of the people to the readers. This is certainly a difficult task, but there are a number of eminent writers who have overcome these difficulties posed by the medium of expression, and achieved international fame and recognition. Tagore, Jawahar Lal, Gandhi, R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand are only few of the figures of International stature.

(2) **National and Regional Prejudices** : Another problem which has always beset Indian writing in English is the prejudice against English. It has always been said that English is a foreign tongue, and as such expression of the deepest layers of emotions, which is

essential for creative writing of merit, is not possible for Indians writing in English. Presumably, Indo-Anglian literature would also be of inferior worth. Such prejudices have been inhibiting and frustrating and have diverted the attention of many a talented writer. Such prejudices are rendered worse by the unhealthy dominance of regional-consciousness, and the wild claims that are made for regional languages in the name of Indianness. "Such prejudices imply (*a*) that only those who write in the regional languages have a monopoly of the deepest levels of experience and their readers are among the most discerning/deep responds to deep ; and (*b*) that those who write in English have neither artistic ability nor integrity of the kind so easily taken for granted in the other writers, and worst of all, (*c*) that their readers are no more than a herd of gullible sheep who can swallow any stuff."

Says **Narasimhaiah**, "such ill-mannered generalizations cause bad blood among writers and injure the life of the mind and prevent our taking legitimate pride in the achievement of our writers whether in English or regional languages. But such is the social complex of Indian society that it is not uncommon to find people who do not, cannot, take pride in any good that befalls someone outside one's own state, one's small village, caste, family, or, oriented as we are, in any good that may accrue to anyone else than oneself. National pride is a virtue only in relation to parochialism. Actually, the Indian writer of English is the only writer who enjoys nation-wide, and even international reputation—and the reputation because it is national and international, as in science, psychology, economics or political thinking, must either be sustained by a critical demonstration of the excellence of the work or be consigned to the lumber room; while it is common knowledge that disproportional praise is not unusual in regional writing that might pass as hardly above the average in the international context." But as **R.K. Narayan** has observed in this land of castes the Indian writer of English lacks the label granted to his compeer in the regional language (who may not be read or understood but will be considered as serving the nation by writing in his mother tongue). "Narayan goes on to say how he was once assailed by a writer in one of the regional languages as a traitor, for writing, as he puts it, to a public thousands of miles away, giving no thought to our peasant or his enlightenment. And yet Narayan's accuser will give anything to find at home or abroad a patron who thinks his work worth translating into English or worth writing upon in an English or American journal. He has, beyond doubt, nothing against English writing by Indians if it can be devoted to translation or favourable appreciation of his work, instead of minimizing his importance. It is obvious he is a victim of his own jealousies and frustrations. He must realize that intolerance in intellectual effort is no less shameful than intolerance in religious matters; indeed worse."

Besides, English is no more, rather it is less, foreign to the highly educated modern Indian than Sanskrit which in the past signified the first flowering of Indian sensibility and, in the centuries, whent it spread, represents the mainstream of Indian culture. "Without comparing with the greatness of Sanskrit, it may not be wrong to say that English has in one respect at least an advantage over Sanskrit in that it is a powerful world language and is today the language of art, science, commerce, diplomacy and intellectual intercourse. And in the context of contemporary Indian politics that it is not the language of any region is precisely its strength, and its extraordinary cosmopolitan character suits the intellectual temper of modern India and a composite culture like ours." **Mr. K.M. Panikkar,** one of India's most distinguished historians and no particular friend of the English or their language in India, has gone so far as to say in his *Foundation of New India* that if the new education had been imparted through the Indian languages the Hindu community would have split into as many different units as there were languages in India and would have repeated the pattern of Europe. From this development India was saved by a common medium of education which Macaulay introduced in India. He demonstrates how English has been woven into the warp and woof of our life. And it is also to be noted that Indians writing in English have achieved signal success in spite of this prejudice against English, and Indians writing in English.

"*Indeed it is unusual to find even in the literary circles of the continent a foreigner who can express himself in English with such facility and correctness as we find in many Hindus*" such as that which "astonished" Bentham, namely, the English which *Raja Ram Mohan Roy* wrote and spoke (though he learnt it when he was 22), and that which made the entire American continent marvel at the 'stormy' monk, Vivekananda, when he thundered across in resonant English, exactly as England was to marvel later when it heard Srinivasa Sastri. Within two decades of the introduction of English language in India, with hardly a handful of Indians learning it, D.L. Richardson, a prominent teacher of the newly founded Hindu College, Calcutta, challenged his 'narrow-minded' countrymen, *i.e.* the English, to ask themselves could they write better verses not in a foreign tongue, but their own. (He had in mind verses of *Kashiprasad Ghose* who was by no means a distinguished writer by our present standards.)

"As for the much dramatized *Babu errors* of English by Indians it is salutary to turn to Mark Twain who lists many delightful examples of Babu English in his *Round the Equator* but nevertheless quite frankly admits that India is well-stocked with natives who speak it and write it as well as the best of us." "That was in America half a century ago, but there is living evidence of the disconcerting use of English in the ancient university of Cambridge (England) for any one who cares to look up *the English Tripos* paper for 1947 (it may well be in many more) in which one-sixth of the total marks of the paper was allotted to correction of errors of usage most of which the Indian student has been taught to eliminate at the pre-university level. Let us not dramatize the faults of Indians writing in English ; it smacks of 'colonial complex' to ignore the graver errors in the use of one's own language and play up the errors of usage in the wielding of foreign language." (**Narasimhaiah**). However, such narrow prejudices have done considerable harm to the cause of Indo-Anglian literature and wrapped and distorted our approach to the whole question of the rightful place of English in India. *It should also be remembered that mother tongue in the sense of the language picked on the mother's knee is never the language of literature ; the language of literature is always an acquired language, a language learned and mastered with painstaking efforts.*

(3) **The Dark Shadow of English Writers** : Further, conscious or unconscious imitation of English writers, surveilleance to the English literary tradition, has also been a serious obstacle in the way of the full growth and maturity of Indo-Anglian literature. Says **C. Paul Verghese**. "the moment an Indian poet starts writing in English he finds it impossible to get away from the weight of English poetic traditions even as his American, Australian, Canadian or Caribbean counterpart. Neither American poetry nor Australian poetry can be distinguished from English poetry on the basis of the style or the language that is used for writing poetry. An Indian poet in English like the Australian or the American poet cannot ignore English poetic traditions. He may not consciously imitate them, but he is unconsciously influenced by the English poetic norms. All the same it is true that an Indian poet closely following English literary traditions cannot but be imitative even as the one who discards them and follows Indian literary traditions for writing English verse cannot escape being odd. What is important is that the Indian poet's use of English should be adequate for him to express his personality or his experience in acceptable literary traditions. This is possible in his case only through an effective mediation between English and Indian poetic traditions and his own poetic experience. It is to be remembered that Mrs Sarojini Naidu could achieve greatness only when she acted upon **Edmund Gosse**'s advice to cultivate Indianness—"to reveal the heart of India"—in her theme and treatment, and not try to imitate the English classics mechanically.

(4) **Some other difficulties**. Indian writers in English have had to face certain other difficulties as well. There has been the indifference, even unwillingness, of publishers to publish their works. The Indian publisher is traditionally conservative and unadventurous, and Indo-Anglian works are accepted with great caution, and often after much persuasion, as they are supposed to be risky investments. Then there is the paucity of literary criticism. Literary criticism serves to maintain standards, as well as to recommend the works of literature to the reading public. Indo-Anglian literature has suffered on both these counts. Standards have tended to remain depressed for want of any significant tradition of literary criticism ; and the reading public has not been sure which works to read and which works to

reject as poor or worthless. Lacking suitable guidance, it has avoided Indo-Anglian literature and turned to English literature instead. An impression has been created that the works of Indian writers in English are not worth much time or energy. However, in recent times popular periodicals like *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and the *Literary Miscellany* of the *workshop school* of poets have rendered valuable service in this connection.

Conclusion

To-day, the Indian writer in English is faced with the problem of a shrinking English environment. (No doubt this shrinkage has been offset to a considerable extent by the spread of higher education and consequent increase in the volume of English reading people.) In the name of patriotism, there has been a constant propaganda since independence against the teaching of English, called a 'foreign tognue'. Naturally, the standards of English have gone down. Shortcut methods have been adopted to teach English as a foreign tongue. It would be unfortunate, indeed, if standards of English are allowed to go down further, for Indo-Anglian literature is still a tender plant. Language and literature are inextricably inter-linked. Let us hope narrow, militant nationalism and parochialism will not prevail to cause immense harm to this kind of literature and to the nation as a whole.

2

The Literary Background : Survey of Indo-Anglian Literature

Literary Context : Its Significance

In the previous chapter we defined Indo-Anglian literature and distinguished it from Anglo-Indian and Indo-English literatures. Various problems which face Indians writing in English were also considered, though very briefly. In the present chapter, it is proposed to take a bird's eye-view of Indo-Anglian literature from its very inception upto comparatively recent times and as the growth of Indo-Anglian literature is closely linked up with the growth and development of the English language in India it would also be considered briefly. Such a study will provide the context essential for a proper assessment of the greatness and achievement of R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, and other Indians writing in English.

Indian Demand for English

It is generally supposed that the study of English was imposed upon Indians by *Lord Macaulay* with the sole purpose of serving the ends of the British administration in India. It is said that he wanted to make India a *cultural colony* of England and to produce an army of English knowing clerks. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Such views are prejudiced, narrow-minded, erroneous and contrary to well-established facts. In the early days of the British rule, the British had no such ulterior motives in introducing English as are generally imputed to them. In 1823, a *Committee of Public Instruction* was appointed by the Government to consider the question of the improvement in the education imparted to the natives, and it allotted all the funds available for education to the *Sanskrit College in Calcutta*. Against this step, enlightened reformers, like *Raja Ram Mohan Roy*, protested vehemently, and petitions were filed demanding "*the imparting of the best and most modern European education through English*". Sanskrit and Persian which were the chief subjects of study, were felt to be entirely inadequate. Raja Ram Mohan Roy himself founded a number of schools to teach Bengali youth through the medium of English. By the time of Macaulay, the demand for the introduction of English as the medium of instruction, and for the modernisation of education was wide-spread. *Macaulay's language policy is to be judged against this context ; it resulted basically from the demand of educated and enlightened Indians for the Anglicisation of education, and not from any villianous desire to serve the ends of the British Colonial rule.*

Macaulay's Contribution

Macaulay's '*Minutes' on Education* is a landmark in the history of English education in India. In *the Minutes* Macaulay advocated the cause of English and said, "We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West...In India English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East." In his task, Macaulay was helped by the Christian missionaries, who founded schools and published grammars and dictionaries, by the English mercantile community, and by the educated Indians and enlightened reformers. No doubt the lure of getting Government service also helped the cause of the English' language. *But it was certainly not an imposition but something which was gladly welcomed and accepted.* **K.K. Datt** asserts that, "The enlightened Indians in the early nineteenth century had come 'to realize the need of linking their countrymen with the progressive cultural forces of the outside world." Extracts from contemporary Bengali papers like *Samachar Darpan, Samachar Chandrika, Bengaduta* etc. published in *Samadpatre Sekaler Katha*, are quoted extensively by K.K. Datt in support of his view in his work *Dawn of Renascent India*, 1964.

Macaulay's Language Policy : Its Success

To those who objected to English and advocated oriental learning on the ground that Indians could not, "attain more than a mere smattering of English," **Macaulay** convincingly replied, "This is not merely an assumption, but an assumption contrary to all reason and experience...There are in this very town natives who are quite competent to discuss political or scientific questions with fluency and precision in the English language. I have heard the very question on which I am now writing discussed by the native gentlemen with a liberality and an intelligence which would do credit to any member of the Committee of Public Instructions." Macaulay's recommendations were fully accepted by the Government and in March 1835 it was decided that the funds for education will be used for English education alone with the object of promoting Western science and literature among the natives. During his tenure of office, Macaulay did his best to carry out this policy. His own zeal coupled with popular enthusiasm for the study of language made this policy eminently successful.

The Study of English : Its Advantages

The study of English and Western science on the whole proved very fruitful. It developed a scientific and rational approach to life, and educated Indians could shake off much of their conservatism and narrowness of outlook. Contact with English language and literature was fruitful to the regional languages, as it led to the growth and development of creative literature in these tongues. If even today, these languages are deficient in science and technology, it is because English educated youngmen have neglected them, and it is because of the lack of demand for scientific books in these languages.

Ram Mohan Roy : His Contribution

It was the dissemination of English that led to the upsurge of nationalism and the Indian Renaissance of the 19th century. In the early decades of the century Indians took to the language with enthusiasm, and many of them tried their hand at literary composition in English. Ram Mohan Roy was the first Indian to write in English. He could speak and write English fluently and forcefully as is clearly brought out by his works on religion. *The Precepts of Jesus* and *The Guide to Peace and Happiness.* But he was a social reformer and much of his writing is utilitarian rather than creative. His prose has lucidity, clarity and flexibility, and compares favourably with the prose of many contemporary Englishmen. Through his well-balanced, well-reasoned prose tracts he could wield considerable influence and bring about the desired change in the thinking of the intelligentsia. Keshub Chandra Sen, Dwarka Nath Tagore and their Brahmo friends were other social reformers who used English prose effectively for communication of their ideas. *These men were among the earliest writers of utilitarian English prose ; they blazed the trial for such great Hindu religious and social reformers and thinkers as Rama Krishna, Vivekananda, Dayananda, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi and Radhakrishnan.*

Early Poets

Indians began to use English for creative expression much before Macaulay's *Minutes* and the implementation of his policy on English education. For example, *Henry Derozio's* volume of poems was published in 1823, and *Kashiprasad Ghose* published his volume of poetry entitled *The Shair and the Other Poems* in 1830. These two eminent Indians may not be great as poets, their work is largely imitative of such English poets as Scott and Byron, but their historical importance is great, for they belong to that small group of Indians who wrote in English much before Macaulay.

Early Novelists

The novel, the short story and the drama were practically non-existent in the Indian languages, before the middle of the century. With the introduction of English in India, there was a spurt of translations, and a number of English classics were soon translated into the various Indian languages. The English classics were the models for the Indians writing in English, and their works were moulded closely on these masters. **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee** became the first Indian writer of a novel in English. He made his mark with *Rajmohan's Wife*, published in 1864. *One Thousand and One Nights* by **S.K. Ghosh** and *Indian Detective Stories* by **S.B. Bannerjee** are other works of prose-fiction in English from Indian hands. Mention may also be made of **Toru Dutt's** novel, called *Bianca* or *The Young Spanish Maiden* which was published after her death by her father in the columns of *the Bengal Magazine*. **Ramesh Chandra Dutt** wrote many novels in Bengali and two of them were translated into English by the novelist himself. These are : *The Slave Girl of Agra* and the *Lake of Palms*.

Early Dramatists

The poverty of the Indian languages in the field of drama is equally marked. There were translations of a number of English dramatists including Shakespeare into regional languages, and these translations stimulated the growth of Indian drama. They also served as models to the early Indian dramatists. The Indian drama, like the novel and the short story, was the result of the impact of English studies. The first Indian play in English *the Persecuted* was written in 1832. But the solid contribution to Indian drama in English upto date is that of **Tagore** and **Shri Aurobindo Ghosh**. **Srinivasa Iyengar** attributes the paucity of good actable English plays written by Indians to the fact that the natural medium of conversation with us—except for the super-sophisticated who live in the cities and in the larger towns, in the Universities or in certain government offices or business houses—is the mother tongue rather than English. According to him 'Unless the characters and situations are carefully chosen, it would be difficult to make a dialogue between Indians in English seem convincing.'

Growth of Indo-Anglian Writing : Its Four Phases

Such were the pioneers in the field of Indian writing in English, and their work is largely imitative of British models. We may call this early phase (from 1830-1880) *The Phase of Imitation*, though even these early writers show considerable mastery over English language and versification. They sowed the seed which was to grow, flourish and bear fruit in the years to come. *The second stage* is that of *Indianisation*, and it may be said to begin with the works of Toru Dutt in the last quarter of the 19th century. *The third phase* may be said to begin with the opening of the new century. It is the phase of increasing Indianisation, when the Indians writing in English acquire a 'national consciousness' and write to interpret the mind and heart of India to the West. *Fourthly*, experimentation and individual talent mark the works of writers in post-independent India ; Indian writers have acquired confidence and strike out along new lines on their own. *This growth and maturity of Indo-Anglian writing is clearly brought out, if we briefly trace the history of Indo-Anglian poetry, novel and drama, from 1880 down to the present day.*

Indo-Anglian Poetry

Nineteenth Century : Michael Madusudan Dutt was a Bengali poet of talent whose one ambition in life was to win recongition as a writer of English verse. He has left behind two volumes of poetry *Visions of the Past* (1848) and *The Captive Ladie* (1849). The English romantic poets, particularly Byron and the classics like Homer, Ovid, Dante, etc., are the main source of his inspiration. He is a mere versifier, but historically he is important for he is the first to make a conscious effort to use Indian imagery, express Indian sentiments, and tell an Indian story. Frequent references to Hindu Mythology accentuate the Indian atmosphere of his verse. His failure arises from the fact that he failed to harmonise Indian and foreign elements.

Shoshee Chander Dutt is another early poet who in his *A Vision of Sumeru and Other Poems* tried to achieve Indianness. The Indian gods like Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are brought in but there are also constant references to Christian and Greek Mythology. This divided allegiance weakens the effect of Indianness the poet seeks to create, and makes it ridiculous and unconvincing. The poem, at best, remains a pale imitation of Milton. **Greece Chunder's** *Cherry Blossoms*, a series of sonnets, is also imitative of English models. Even when the theme is Indian, the imagery remains mostly Christian. Greece Chunder rarely tries to use Indian imagery.

B.M. Malabari is a much greater writer than Shoshee Dutt and Greece Chunder. In his collection of verses entitled *The Indian Muse in English Garb* he frequently deals with the blessing of the British rule. Many of them are occasional poems. But his Indianness is seen in those rare poems in which he bewails the loss of the virtues of Indian character. In such verses speaks the heart of India, yearning for freedom from the foreign yoke. However, Malabari's talent is revealed at its best in his prose-works like *The Indian Eye on English Life*.

It is in the poetry of **Toru Dutt** that the soul of India is really revealed. She began her poetic career with *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* written when she was only nineteen years of age, though published much later after her death. It is a collection of translations of about 200 French poems from various hands. The collection is not a mere translation but a "transcreation", and speaks volumes for the genius of the young poetess. But in the words of **Edmund Gosse,** "Toru's chief legacy to posterity is her verse collection *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1883) which includes the ancient Hindu stories of Savitri, Sita, Prahlad, Dhurva, etc. The poems appeal to the primary emotions of love, filial piety, devotion, gratitude, etc. *It is for the first time that we find purely Indian themes being treated in English against a purely Indian background.* This verse-collection is an important landmark in the history of Indo-Anglian literature. In her early death at the age of twenty-one, Indo-Anglian poetry suffered an irreparable loss.

Another great poet at the turn of the century is **Manmohan Ghosh**, the brother of the renowned Aurobindo Ghosh. *His Love Songs and Elegies* was published in 1898, and his *Songs of Love and Death* was published after his death in 1926. The bulk of his poetry expresses his personal sorrow and sense of loneliness and except for a few poems expressing a nostalgia for India, there is very little of India in his poetry. But "the technical perfection and the lyrical quality of his poems have earned for him an abiding place in Indo-Anglian literature". **George Sampson** calls him *the most remarkable of Indian poets who wrote in English.*

20th Century : It is **Sarojini Naidu** who carries forward the task left incomplete by the early death of Toru Dutt, that of interpreting the soul of India to the West and creating an authentic Indian atmosphere. Her poetry is pictorial, has the romantic colouring and smooth rhythms of the Georgians, and shows perfect mastery over her chosen medium. She achieves singal success in the handling of Indian imagery and the expression of Indian personality.

She began with imitating Keats and other English classics. Her early poetry was found by **Edmund Gosse** to be *Western in feeling and imagery* and *totally without individuality*. He advised her to attempt to reveal *the heart of India* and *to be a genuine Indian poet of the Deccan and not a clever machine-made imitator of the English classics.* She took the advice seriously ; for the bulk of her poetry in *the Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time* and *The Broken Wing* is Indian in spirit, thought, emotion and imagery. *The Festival of Serpents* and *Leili* are two examples of the Hindu accent of Sarojini poetry. The concluding lines of *The Festival of Serpents* which is in the form of a devotional song and conveys an idea of the Hindu religious life, beautifully sum up the Hindu concept of God :

Swift are ye as streams and soundless as the dewfall,
Subtle as the lightning and splendid as the sun ;
Seer are ye and symbol of the ancient silence.
Where life and death and sorrow and ecstasy are one.

Leili depicts an Indian evening and besides being Hindu in its basic inspiration, it shows how the imagery of a poem can also be Hindu :

A cast-mark on the azure brows of Heaven,
The golden moon burns sacred, solemn, bright
The winds are dancing in the forest-temple,
And swooning at the holy feet of Night,
Hush, in the silence mystic voices sing,
And make the gods their incense-offering.

Commenting on the image of the moon as a *cast-mark on the azure brows of Heaven*, **J.H. Cousins** remarks : "The symbolism in Mrs. Naidu's poems of the dancing winds as devotees in the temple of nature must surely stand among the fine things of literature ; still good as it is, it is poor in comparison with the splendidly daring piece of anthropomorphosis of the first two lines. The figuring of the moon as a caste-mark on the forehead of heaven is in itself a unique achievement of the imagination in poetry in the English language."

Sarojini Naidu has described typical Indian scenes in her poetry. She sings of the palanquin-bearers lightly bearing their precious burden 'like a pearl on a string'. She describe how the Coromandel fishers gather their nets from the shore and venture out upon the sea. She describes how the bangle-sellers carry their 'shining loads' to the temple to sell them to 'happy daughters and happy wives'. While Toru Dutt described the puranic legends of ancient India, Sarojini has immortalised the familiar scenes of everyday life in modern India. She may lack depth a little, but she always writes gracefully. Her metrical dexterity and craftmanship mark a distinct advance in the handling of English language and versification. Use of suggestive similes and metaphors and telling images are other distinctive features of her art.

Rabindranath Tagore *is the greatest of the Indians writing in English.* His fame as a poet in English rests chiefly on his the *Gitanjali* which is a "transcreation" of the Bengali original. It was with this work that he achieved international fame and recognition, and was awarded the *Nobel Prize for Literature.* He is one of the greatest lyric poets of the world, and **Edward Thompson** calls his handling of poetic prose an "impeccable metrical achievement". His thought and imagery are Indian, and his poetry is in the tradition of Indian devotional poetry. His message is spiritual, both Hindu and universal at one and the same time. In his poetry Indianness acquires a universal significance. According to **Verghese** the main features of his poetry are, "its humanistic essence combined with a spirituality, a love of nature and man, and the expression of the beauty and splendour of the earth. The poet's spiritual message does not, however, enjoin us to run away from the 'fret and fever of life' and seek shelter in a hermitage, but insists on our full participation in the joys and sorrows of life. Stress on Tagore's mysticism has led to a neglect of his poetry as poetry, it has tended to obscure his greatness as a poet and artist. He perfected a kind of incantatory rhythmic prose and demonstrated that Indian sentiment, thought and imagery can be as well expressed in English as in any Indian language."

Aurobindo Ghosh is another great Indo-Anglian poet, prophet and seer who started his career at the turn of the century and continued to write well into the 20th century. In his long poetic career stretching from 1890-1950 he has written lyrics, narrative poems, a comic epic, and a large body of philosophic poems. As he wrote in English and English alone, **Dr. S. Iyengar** considers him the most outstanding of the Indo-Anglians. His poems like *Urvasie*, *Love and Death*, *Savitri* are Hindu in setting, sentiment and expression. These poems are full of sensuous images and sweet music. He is a great metrical artist who tried to adapt a number of classical metres to English. His mystic poetry has a *mantric* quality, very close to the Vedic *mantras*. He is an adept in the use of blank verse and other English metres. "But his greatest achievement lies in the fact that his poetry carries an aroma of the spirituality of India and achieves a rare fusion of personal vision and the spiritual personality of India." He constantly reminds one of the poetry of *the Vedas*.

Post-Independence Era : A good deal of poetry continues to be written in English and there is much experimentation in an effort to achieve modernity. Modern techniques derived from such English craftsmen as Eliot, Auden and Dylan Thomas, as well as from the film industry and the advertising industry are being used. This experimental approach, this quest for originality and newness, this stress on individuality and the rejection of all that is traditional often leads to fantastic results. There is much 'image hunting' and 'word-hunting' in contemporary Indo-Anglian poetry, and one often doubts if anything really meaningful is being done. But there are a number of good poets also, like *Dom Moraes*, *Nissim Ezekiel*, *P. Lal*, *Kamala Das*, *A.K. Ramanujan* and others. *The Writers Worskhop Poets*, have done, and are doing commendable work. Giving an estimate of contemporary Indo-Anglian Poetry **Amalendu Bose** writes, "As a historical phenomenon, it is engrossingly interesting that since 1947 a great deal of poetry has been written by Indians in English ; that in both quality and quantity, this poetry compares very well with the English poetry that Indians wrote from the days of *Derozio* and *Kashiprasad Ghose* till 1947 ; that in both quality and quantity, this poetry perhaps compares well also with the poetry of quite a few of the current Indian languages and that this poetry is the expression of certain attitudes and values believed in by certain sections of today's Indian society, wholly urban and metropolitan, middle class, familiar with the Euro-American world, either by direct personal experience or in a derivative manner that claims the validity of direct experience. This poetry, in respect of its purposive sense of direction as much as of its balance-sheet of achievement, deserves the attention of the serious student of Indian poetry.

Indo-Anglian Novel

While English prose for social and political purposes was written by Indians from earliest times with rare force, eloquence and effectiveness, excellence in the writing of creative prose could be achieved much later than in the writing of verse. But despite its late start, the novel has gone far ahead of poetry both in quantity and quality. It was only with the Gandhian struggle for freedom that the Indo-Anglian novel really came to its own. The ideals of the Indian struggle for freedom are reflected in such novels as **K.S. Venkataramani's** *Murugan, The Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan, The Patriot* (1932). "With the publication of **Mulk Raj Anand's** *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936) and **Raja Rao's** *Kanthapura* (1938), the novel in English may be said to have come of age. Today the Indian novelists writing in English are large in number. Besides *Mulk Raj Anand*, *Raja Rao* and *R.K. Narayan*, the three foremost Indian writers of fiction in English, there are also *K. Nagarajan*, *Bhabani Bhattacharya*, *Manohar Malgonkar*, *Khushwant Singh*, *Balachandra Rajan*, *Kamala Markandaya* and *Anita Desai*." All these novelists, and many more, have considerably enriched Indo Anglian fiction.

Its Peculiar Problems : The Indian novel made such a late start because, in the beginning, it had to face a number of peculiar problems. One of the most difficult problems which had to be faced was the problem of language. The Indian writer in English must evolve a language flexible and varied enough to suit different fictitious characters drawn from most varied professions and strata of society, as well as Indian enough to create the impression of verisimilitude and authenticity. He must also create an Indian atmosphere. *Mulk Raj Anand* has tried to solve the problem of medium by Indianisation of English words, by literal translation into English of Indian expressions, proverbs, etc., and the result has not always been a happy one. *Raja Rao* has more successfully solved this problem. He does not write Baboo English, but successfully transmutes into English, the idiom, the rhythm and the tone of the natural speech of this characters. He thus achieves an Indian idiom with its distinct echo of regional speech without, however, lapsing into vulgarisms which mar the work of Anand. Other Indian novelists in English have solved, and are trying to solve, this problem in their own way, so that their language may become a suitable medium for the expression of the emotional and intellectual life of Indians. *R.K. Narayan*, for example, writes "admirably clean English", an English which he finds serves his purpose admirably. It is perfectly adapted to communicate Indian sensibility.

The Indian novelist in English, in other words, "must evolve an Indian English before he can achieve any signal success". **Prof. V.K. Gokak** defines Indian English as, "*the evolution of a distinct standard—a standard the body of which is correct English usage, but* *whose soul is Indian in colour, thought and imagery, and now and then, even in the evolution of an Indian idiom which is expressive of the unique quality of the Indian mind while conforming to the 'correctness' of English usage. It is illustrative of a special type of language phenomenon—a language foreign to the people who use it but accepted by them because of political and, recently, cultural reasons. In other words good Indian English, is simply good English. English that differs little in vocabulary and idiom from good English as written in New York or London, so that it brings out the inwardness of Indian life and literature.*" Such an English is being successfully evolved by the Indian novelists writing in English.

Another peculiar problem that faces the Indian novelist in English is that of creating an Indian consciousness. Novels in English are likely to command a market not only in India, but all over the English speaking world. Hence he must project an image of India and her culture, which is authentic and national, rather than distorted, narrow and regional. He must overcome his regional loyalties, and project his vision of the cultural and national identity of India which is sincere and truthful. The problem is further complicated by the cultural changes that have taken place as a result of the impact of the West. Writes **C. Paul Verghese** in this connection, "The dynamics of her contemporary evolution *vis-a-vis* her traditions, and the realities of her modern life naturally are reflected in the novels written in modern India. Consequently, the Indian novelist faces the problem of giving artistic expression to the effect of economic changes and industrialisation on the community, the class structure, the old relations among occupations and professions and above all in family ties." *Cultural contact* and *cultural change* must be faithfully expressed by the Indo-Anglian novelist.

Still another peculiar problem arises from the fact that the novel in English has an All-India character, and is likely to be read even beyond national borders. *Hence the novelist tends to explain regional customs, rites and ceremonies for readers in other parts of the country. Often such explanations stand out of the context, strike a jarring note, and become a serious artistic fault.* Such explanations are certainly necessary, but they should be made an integral part of the story. They should be justified by their context. The novelist cannot ignore the reader. He must remember that he is often not present on the scene, and that artistic success lies in making him see it. Explanatory details are, therefore, unavoidable, but they must be carefully and skilfully woven into the fabric of the total design. This problem has, however, been more successfully solved than the other ones. "Not only **Raja Rao** and **R.K. Narayan** but also lesser writers like **Kamala Markandaya** in her *Nectar in a Sieve* and **Menon S. Marath** in his *The Wound of Spring* have successfully solved this problem." In their works, the successful weaving of such details into the total texture creates a delicious illusion of reality.

Its Themes : To-day, the themes of the Indo-Anglian novel are many and varied. **K.B. Vaid**, commenting on the theme of the Indian novelist, says that his thematic preoccupations are : 'portrayal of poverty, hunger and disease ; portrayal of widespread social evils and tensions ; examination of the survivals of the past ; exploration of the hybrid culture of the dislocations and conflicts in a tradition-ridden society under the impact of an incipient, half-hearted industrialization' (*The Illustrated Weekly of India*, May 26, 1963). Some other themes of the novel in English are inter-racial relations, the Indian national movement and the struggle for freedom (Raja Rao *Kanthapura*), partition of India and the death, destruction and suffering caused by it (*Train to Pakistan*). "Depiction of hunger and poverty of Indians (Bhabani Bhattacharya *So Many Hungers*), Indian rural life (Venkataramani, *Murugan*, *The Tiller*), conflict between tradition and modernity (Anand *Untouchable*), continue to engage the attention of the novelist. The theme of the confrontation of the East and the West has been successfully dealt with by *Raja Rao*, *Balachandran Rajan*, *Kamala Markandaya* and many others. The younger novelists display an increasing inwardness in their themes. The themes of loneliness, of rootlessness, the exploration of the psyche and the inner man have been dealt with by **Anita Desai** in her two latest novels, *Cry, the Peacock* and *Voices in the City* and by **Arun Joshi** in his *The Foreigner*.

Its Variety and Vitality : The Indian novel in English is thus characterised by a variety of themes and techniques. It continues to change and grow, and adapt itself to the changing Indian environment. Social, political, technological and industrial changes have brought corresponding changes in its substance. *However, in the field of characterisation the Indian novelist in English has not been quite so successful.* With some exceptions his characters continue to be stereotypes. The problem of creating 'round', three dimensional figures, has not been successfully tackled so far. Even novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, despite all their psychological insights, are deficient in this all-important aspect of the art of a novelist. As **K.B. Vaid** points out, many Indian novelists have failed to create adequately individualised characters. *Further, the novelist even today is sometimes carried away by the lure of creating the image of a romantic and glamorous India, the India of Rajas and Maharajas, and of mystic saints and sadhus who can achieve miracles.* Thus Anand in his private life of a *Prince* and Malgonkar in his *The Princes* portray the splendours of royal life during its last days, and Kamala Markandaya in her *Possession* presents a wierd picture of a mysterious India. Such novels distort reality and the novelist must guard himself against this danger.

Indo-Anglian Drama : Its Paucity

Paucity of Indian drama in English is the one fact which strikes even a cursory student of Indo-Anglian literature. In the genre

Indian writers have lagged behind, and this despite the fact that the first Indian play in English *The Persecuted* was written as early as 1832. Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh are the only two writers who have made contribution to Indian drama in English. **Tagore**'s plays have been failures upon the stage because they are excessively symbolic-lyrical poetic plays. In the original they have great musical qualities, but even these qualities have been lost in their English 'transcreations'. In his plays like *Chitra*, *Post Office*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, Tagore has tried to impart new values and symbolic significance to ancient Hindu myths and legends. Whatever may be the literary value of such plays, they are not successful stage plays. However, plays like *Sacrifice* have been quite successful on the stage also.

Aurobindo's plays are regular poetic plays, entirely unfit for the stage. In his plays *Perseus ; the Deliverer ; Rodogune* ; *Eric*, *The Veziers of Bassora*, he used the blank verse of Shakespeare and the Elizbethans, which sounds artificial and unnatural in the modern age. It has no roots in the idioms and rhythms of current speech. Hence their failure on the stage.

This failure to capture speech rhythms and consequent artificiality characterises Indian verse drama in general. This is also the besetting sin of **G.V. Desani**'s *Hali* and **Bharati Sarabhai**'s *The Well of the People*. They might have literary poetic qualities, but they do not have dramatic qualities. Dialogue in drama should be graceful and speakable, it should be racy and close to the spoken language. But even such able writers of drama in English as **Harindranath Chattopadhyaya** *The Proclamation* and **T.P. Kailasam** *The Brahaman's Curse* fail in this respect.

Indian prose drama in English also suffers from these very faults. **Harindranath's** *Five Plays*, *Fyzee*, **Rahamin's** *Daughter of India*, **A.S.P. Ayyar's** *The Slave of India and Other Plays*, **Asif Currimbhoy's** *The Tourist Mecca*, *The Doldrummers* and *Dumb Dancer*, and many other, do not rise above ordinary conversation in their dialogue, and are dull, drab, flat and artificial. There is too much of speechifying, too frequent intrusions of colloquialisms, and wrong use of Indian phrases and idioms. Such plays are the products of craft rather than of art. The dramatists have no individual vision of life, or at least they fail to communicate it through their works.

Pratap Sharma is one of those few Indo-Anglian dramatists whose plays *A Touch of Brightness*, *The Professor Has War-Cry*, etc., are more successful dramatically. They are good acting plays. But there is too much of verbosity and irrelevancy in dialogue. The dramatist fails to exploit the resources of English as a spoken language and adapt it to his creative purpose. **Gieve Patel**'s *Princess* is singularly free from these faults. He succeeds in giving his language a touch of the local idiom which, therefore, is more refreshing and natural. *It is a landmark in the history of Indo-Anglian drama* *for in it the dramatist has successfully tackled the problem of dialogue.* **Nissim Ezekiel** in his plays *Nalinin* and *The Marriage Poem* is successful in his dialogues, and his example shows that success in dialogue can be easily achieved, if English knowing characters, who will naturally speak English, are introduced, instead of characters who are not likely to speak English. This limits the scope of the dramatist but it makes for greater realism and authenticity.

Another successful play by an Indian writer **Santha Rama Rau** is *A Passage to India*, a close adaptation of the well-known novel of that name. She shows great dexterity in the handling of dialogue. Her task was made easier by the fact that the dialogue in her play closely follows dialogue in the novel. But there is skilful adaptation and selection. As **Paul Verghese** puts it, "Santha Rama Rau deserves praise for the careful selection of those pieces of dialogue in the novel that can be effective on the stage and for putting them together with appropriate connecting links, wherever required, so that the play becomes a truly dramatic rendering of the novel."

The above discussion shows that proper dialogue and carefully selected situations count most in drama. The problem of truly effective stage-dialogue will have to be solved before the Indo-Anglian drama can come to its own.

Conclusion

In short, Indo-Anglian literature continues to grow and flourish and this despite all the misguided and prejudiced and politically motivated campaign against English as a 'foreign' language, a language which comes in the way of its growth. More Indians are writing in English than ever before, and the Indo-Anglian writer is enjoying a much wider market. It has, indeed, a bright future.

3

Raja Rao : Man and Writer

Birth and Parentage—Education

Raja Rao comes of a very old South Indian Brahamin family. He was born in 1909 in the village of Hassana, in Mysore. His father was a professor of Canaresse in Hydrabad. After having matriculated from Hydrabad, he went over to Aligarh for higher education. There he was lucky enough to come into contact with Prof. Dickinson. He inspired him to study French language and literature. He took his B.A. degree from Nizam College, Hydrabad. He was awarded government scholarship by the Hydrabad university, and on this scholarship, he went to France to continue his study of French literature there. First, he studied at the university of Montpellier, and then worked for the Doctorate degree at the university of Sorbonne under the supervision of such an eminent scholar as Prof. Cazamian, a name familiar to all students of English Literature.

In France

He lived in France from 1928 to 1939, returned to India on the outbreak of World War II in 1940, and again went to France in 1946 and lived there till 1956. There he married an American actress Katherine, now called Katherine Rao, and he has a son by her. It was in France, thousands of miles away from India, that his first novel *Kanthapura* (1938) was written and though the collection of stories entitled *The Cow of the Barricades*, was published in 1947, most of the stories contained in it were also written in France. His second novel *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), published after a gap of twenty-two years, has France as its scene of action, and reveals that Raja Rao has fully absorbed and assimilated the culture of the West. In the early thirties, before leaving for France for higher studies, Raja Rao had written a couple of essays to express his love for his motherland and his fascination for Indian culture and Vedantic philosophy. All this love of Indian culture and philosophy colours *The Serpent and the Rope.*

In India : Search for a Guru

On his return to India in 1940 he went to Benaras, so that he might have a first hand knowledge of the spiritual tradition of India. In Benaras he actively considered for sometime whether he should renounce the world and turn a sanyasi. He was saved from this disastrous course through his meeting with *Swami Atmanand*, the great Vedantic scholar, whom the novelist accepted as his *Guru*, guide and mentor. Hence it is that he attaches such great importance to the role of a 'guru' and the quest for a 'Guru' is an ever-recurring theme in his novels. From Benaras he went to central India and spent some months in 1942 in Gandhiji's *Ashram* there. He also spent some time in deep meditation at Mahakal Temple in Ujjain. His mind was torn with deep spiritual conflicts, and through meditation he regained peace and serenity, and then returned to France (1946) after the end of the world war.

In America

It was in 1950 that Raja Rao visited the U.S.A. for the first time, and was fascinated by American culture and way of life. No doubt, Americans are materialistic, but they are energetic and enterprising, and can do much towards transforming life on this planet. He studied avidly the works of Ralpho Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. He has ever since been a great admirer of these great Americans, because like him they, too, were deeply interested in Indian philosophy, particularly Vedantic philosophy. He worked as a visiting philosopher, lecturing at various American universities, and expounding Hindu philosophy to American students. At present he is settled in the U.S.A., and teaches Indian philosophy,—both Buddhist and Vedantic, at the university of Texas. Tireless and energetic even at the age of seventy, he spends hours lecturing and expounding his ideas.

Fame and Recognition

Raja Rao is a great son of mother India, and his greatness has received national and international recognition. He won the *Sahitya Akademi Award* for his *The Serpent and the Rope*, which has been called the best Indo-Anglian novel ever written. For sometime, his name was also actively considered for the award of *the Nobel Prize* for literature. He has recently been awarded the *Padma Bhushan* by the government of India. Santha Rama Rau comments on Raja Rao in the following words : "*perhaps the most brilliant—and certainly the most interesting—writer of modern India*". He is greatly admired by Andre Malraux and Lawrence Durrell. Durrell comments on *The Serpent and the Rope* : "Hurrah for you ! You not only do India great honour, but you have honoured English literature by writing it in our language...truly magnificant...packed with the real magic of poetry...a truly contemporary work, one by which an age can measure itself, its values." Another critic holds : "I know nothing in literature that confronts East and West more tenderly, more rigorously". Raja Rao has earned such valued encomiums from the eminent critics of international fame.

Personal Appearance

Raja Rao is a man of short stature. Slight and hardly five feet tall, he is saved from appearing diminutive by his head, which is large and commanding, with thick grey hair swept back from the forehead. "His features are artistocratic and forcefully convey his mood, whether he is carefully attentive, intensely concentrating on a problem, or chuckling with delight at a particularly clever phrase." Raja Rao is the pride of India, though he, is better known and appreciated abroad than in his own country.

His Works

Raja Rao is not a very prolific writer. He writes slowly, revises frequently, and his works have been published at great intervals, because he wants to achieve perfection. His works are :

1. *Kanthapura, 1938*. It was with this novel that Raja Rao made his debut as a novelist. It it a vivid, graphic and realistic portrayal of the Gandhian struggle for the freedom of the country. This is artistically the best of his novels. **E.M. Forster** has praised it as "the finest novel to come out *of India in recent years*".

2. *The Serpent and the Rope, 1960*. It has been called the spiritual auto-biography of the novelist, and was published twenty-two years after *Kanthapura*. Here Raja Rao has philosophised the Indo-Anglian novel, and has received glorious tributes for the work. However, his philosophical interests become too obtrusive and at times he becomes tiresome and obscure. Still it is a truly magnificant novel, and says one critic, "I know nothing in literature that confronts East and West more tenderly, more rigorously". Through it Raja Rao established a new *genre* of prose fiction and enlarged the scope of the novel-form.

3. *The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories, 1947*. It is a collection of nine stories written between 1933-1944 in France. They reveal at every step the writers love of his motherland, and the sociological concerns of the 1930's.

4. *The Cat and Shakespeare, 1965*. The novelist has called it a "philosophical comedy" and its setting is provided by the famine of 1942. It is sub-titled, "*A Tale of Modern India*". It is a curious mixture of fantasy and realism. The plot suffers from many absurdities and crudities.

5. *The Policeman and the Rose and Other Stories, 1978*. The title piece is a *novelle*, and the collection includes a few other stories written subsequent to those which were published in *The Cow of the Barricades*. One of the finest stories in this collection is "*India : A Fable*".

4

The Novels of Raja Rao

A Sincere Artist : Meagre Output

Raja Rao is not a prolific writer. The bulk of his literary output is rather meagre. This is so because he wants to achieve perfection, and consequently writes slowly and revises frequently. Moreover, his philosophical and religious concerns leave him little time for literature. He has only three novels, besides a number of short stories and essays and sketches, to his credit. They are *Kanthapura*, 1938, *The Serpent and the Rope*, 1960 and *The Cat and Shakespeare*, 1965. Familiarity with these novels is essential for a proper appreciation of the art of the novelist.

(1) Kanthapura

This is the first novel of Raja Rao, and in many ways his most perfect and satisfying work. It was written in France thousands of miles away from India and yet it gives a most graphic, vivid and realistic account of the Gandhian freedom struggle in the 1930's and its impact on the masses of India.

The time of action is 1930, and the scene of action is Kanthapura, a typical south Indian Village on the slopes of the Western Ghats. Moorthy, the central figure, is a youngman educated in the city. He is a staunch Gandhi man, and the Gandhian civil disobedience movement comes to this remote secluded village, when Moorthy comes from the city with the message of the Mahatma. He goes from door to door, even in the Pariah quarter of the village, and explains to the villagers the significance of Gandhi's struggle for independence. He inspires them to take to *charka*-spinning and weaving their own cloth. Soon the Congress Committee is formed in Kanthapura, publicity material is brought from the city, and freely circulated in the village. A volunteer corps is formed, and the volunteers are trained and educated so that they may remain non-violent in the face of government repression. In this task of organising the freedom struggle in Kanthapura, he is helped by Ratna, a young lady, of progressive and enlightened views and Patel Range Gowda, the Sardar Patel of the village.

The Red-man's Government, on its part, takes prompt steps to counter the moves of the Gandhi-men and to contain the movement. Policeman, Bade Khan, is posted in the village, and he is actively helped and supported by Bhatta, the Brahmin. Bhatta enlists the support of a Swami in the city, who seems to be a powerful religious authority and wields much influence on the ignorant people of the village. He threatens to excommunicate all those who fraternise with the Pariahs. Moorthy is actually ex-communicated and a few desert him, but, on the whole, the people remain undaunted and firm in their support to the Gandhi movement. Reports regarding the Dandi march of the Mahatma to break the Salt law, and the enthusiasm it had evoked throughout the country, reach the village and do much to boost the public morale.

Soon there are satyagrahs and picketings. The villagers under the leadership of Moorthy offer Satyagrah outside the toddy plantation. There is police lathi-charge and many are wounded and hurt seriously. A large number of people are arrested and sent to jail. This is followed by the picketing of the toddy booth outside the Skeffington Coffee Estate. Government repression is even more ruthless this time. Even women, children and old men are not spared. The suffering of the fellow-villagers touches the heart of the workers of the Skeffington Coffee Estate and they too join their suffering brethren. The atmosphere resounds with shouts of, "*Mahatma Gandhi Ki jai*". Even larger numbers are arrested. Moorthy is also arrested and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. In his absence Ratna looks after the Congress-work in the village. Women are organised and trained.

Then comes the no-tax campaign. The people are directed not to pay land revenue to the unjust Red men. They should remain peaceful and non-violent even if their fields, crops, cattle and houses are auctioned and occupied. They remain non-violent in the beginning, but soon violence breaks out. Government is ruthless in its repression. There are merciless lathi-charges, and even shootings. The atmosphere resounds with shrieking and crying as well as with shouts of "*Mahatma Gandhi Ki jai*".

The villagers put up a brave resistance but ultimately they are compelled to flea. Their morale is broken. They have to leave Kanthapura, trudge along for miles over unknown territory and finally find shelter in a remote village. They have been defeated, but in their very defeat lies their victory. Their brave resistance has given a jolt to the government and as such jolts were being administered all over the country, the British government was bound to be shaken and overthrown in course of time. It was so overthrown in 1947 ; and the British were forced to withdraw. The heroic struggle of the people of Kanthapura is thus a milestone in India's march towards independence.

2. The Serpent and the Rope

Raja Rao published his second novel, in 1960, after a gap of twenty-two years. In this novel Raja Rao's philosophical, metaphysical and religious concerns become too obtrusive at places, and hence many readers find it tiresome and boring. However, through this novel Raja Rao founded a new *genre*—the philosophical novel—and has vividly and forcefully realised the confrontation of eastern and western cultures. The novel is also regarded as the spiritual autobiography of the novelist.

The time of the story is around the year 1950, and the action constantly shuttlecocks between India, France and England. The story is by Ramaswamy or Rama the hero-narrator of the novel. He is a young educated man belonging to a rich zamindar family of South India. He is an M.A. in history, and on government scholarship goes to France to carry on his research work there and earn the doctorate degree of the university of Sorbonne. There he comes across Madeleine, a young French Lady, a teacher at one of the university colleges, and falls in love with her. They are soon married and live happily together in Axis near Paris. A son is born to them, but unfortunately he dies soon after. This is a great shock to Madeleine, and she cannot be her usual self again. We are also introduced to her Uncle Charles and Aunt Zoubie and her half-sister Catherine, as well as to two other youngmen, Georges and Lezo. Later, Georges marries Catherine. A number of other French and European characters are also introduced and in this way is built up a realistic and convincing picture of the western culture and way of life. Madeleine, like Rama, is also interested in philosophy and religion, and often there are philosophical discussions between the two.

When Rama has been in Europe for about a year, his father dies, and he has to hurry back home. He carries Little Mother (the third wife of his father) and his baby brother, Sridhara, to Benaras for the last rites of his father, and a detailed account is given of the city and its philosophical significance. From Benaras they go over to Allahabad where they stay for sometime with an old friend of Rama's father. There he meets Pratap Singh who is betrothed to Savithri, the young western educated daughter of the Raja of Surajpur. She does not want to marry him. She is back home from Cambridge at the time for the vacations and Rama is introduced to her, so that he may get an opportunity of changing her views. Rama is fascinated by her, and the meeting is far-reaching in its consequences.

From Allahabad they go to Hardwar and then return to their home. An account is given of Rama's two sisters—Saroja and

Sukmari—and other members of the household. Saroja, a young educated lady of progressive views, is dissatisfied with their conventional life and orthodox ways. She longs for the freedom which they enjoy in the west. Roma is intoxicated with her womanhood and regards her as the very embodiment of the Feminine Principle. Sukmari is an ordinary, school-going girl, contented and happy.

Having settled affairs at home, Ram returns to France to complete his work on the thesis which it is expected would take one year more. Georges is a frequent visitor to their home, and Lezo also comes thrice a week to give Madeleine lessons in Pali so that she may study Buddhism at first hand. He tries to make love to her, but is firmly and sternly rebuffed and rebuked. After that he becomes quite tame and docile. They visit uncle Charles and aunt Zoubie, and then Catherine (the cousin of Madeleine) comes to stay with them for sometime. Georges and she are soon in love, and some time later are happily married. Savithri also comes to them on a short visit on her way to Cambridge from India. Rama also visits Cambridge in connection with his research work, and comes in close contact with Savithri. Many are the evenings they pass together. He is passionately in love with her. He tries to think of Madeleine but finds himself thinking of Savithri. After his work at Cambridge is over, he comes to London and stays there for sometime to study in the London Museum and other libraries. Savithri visits him in his apartments, and one morning she comes with coconut and *kumkum*, performs *aarti*, touches his feet, and thus takes him to be her lord and master, with God as their witness. Rama gives her the toe-rings which Little Mother had given to him for Madeleine but which were still in his possession. Savithri is ready to run away with him, but he advises her to the contrary. Like a dutiful Hindu girl, she must go back to her home and merry the husband destined for her. Savithri eventually marries Pratap Singh, and it is hoped she was a good wife to him.

Rama constantly receives letters from Saroja, Little Mother and Sukmari and is thus kept informed of affairs at home. When Saroja's marriage is fixed up he has to come back to India to supervise the arrangements as head of the family and give away the bride. He goes for the wedding, even though Madeleine is in the family way at the time. He expected to return to her in time for the delivery, but is prevented from doing so by his illness. His lungs had always been week, he had always been prone to suffer from cough and cold, and now he twice throws out blood copiously and is seriously ill. The doctors order him to the warmer climate of Bangalore for three months. During this time, Madeleine has to undergo a Caesarian operation. Her life is saved, but their second child too dies. This is the second shock received by Madeleine and it changes the whole course of their future life.

As soon as the doctor's permit, Rama comes back to Madeleine. He finds that a great change has come over her. She has moved to a much smaller house, and is gradually giving up the comforts and luxuries of life one after another. She has become a devout Buddhist, and is gradually moving along the eight-fold path of the lord. She keeps fasts frequently, and passes most of her time is prayer and meditation. She even goes on a long forty-one day fast, and comes out of the ordeal successfully. Normal life with her is no longer possible, and it is obvious that they must separate.

However, they continue to live together for sometime more. Then Rama goes to London to look up certain references. He falls ill there, is hospitalised, and one of his lungs has to be taken out. Savithri who is in London for the coronation of the young Queen frequently visits him. He is also visited by Lakshmi, a young lady whom he had met at Cambridge. On his discharge from the hospital, he comes to Paris, takes apartment there, so that undisturbed, in seclusion, he may write out his thesis. He visits Madeleine and finds that she has moved into another house, even smaller, and has disposed off practically all of their furniture. She has become a *Sanyasni*, though she still keeps up her job. After a brief stay, Rama returns to his apartment. It is their last meeting. Soon after, at Madeleine's instance, divorce proceedings are initiated and they are duly divorced.

Thus Rama is still in France, but without a home. Letters from home indicate that he has lost his moornings there also. Little Mother lives with Saroja and her husband, and Sukmari has also married and gone away. However Catherine and Georges, who live in Paris, befriend him and try to make him comfortable in every way. He visits them frequently and is soon deeply attached to Vera, their only child. Georges revises his thesis. After the work is over, he plans to go to Travancore where he hops to find a *Guru*. However, ambiguity marks the end of the novel, for it is not clear whether he actually returns to India, or his attachment to Vera keeps him back in Paris.

Such is the bare outline of the story of the novel. But the heart of the novel, its essence, lies in the philosophy and metaphysics which runs through it, and in its presentation of the East-West encounter.

3. The Cat and Shakespeare

This is the third novel of Raja Rao, and the novelist has subtitled it "a philosophical comedy". It is marred by much crudity and absurdity. It is the tale of two friends Govindan Nair and Rama Krishna Pai. There are numerous digressions and much that is entirely superfluous.

Govindan Nair is a poor clerk in the rationing office, getting only Rs. 45 a month. Krishna Pai is also a clerk and the two live in adjoining houses in Trivendrum. When Pai falls sick he is well looked after by Govindan Nair and his son Sridhan Pai loves Shantha, a school teacher, and has immoral relations with her. Govindan Nair is charged with corruption and fraudulent practices. His boss, Boothalinga Iyer, dies of heart failure as a cat jumps suddenly on his bald head. When Govindan Nair is tried in the court, he brings the cat in the court of law. He throws the whole blame on Boothalinga Iyer by saying that what he did was under orders from his boss who was then dead. This is how Govindan Nair defends himself. "My Lord, I was saying : "One day after the whole office was empty and Boothalinga Iyer was alone, he said : Govindan Nair, stay there. I have a job for you. And he produced the Benaras pot that he had hidden deeply in the sample rice sack. There was one sack always in the office. So he produced the Benaras pot and said : Go to Mutthalinga Nayak Street and in the third house right by the temple Mantap there must be a widow called Mennakshiama. Please hand over this one hundred and nine rupees to her. That is all there is in it." The cat creates a diversion in the court by jumping here and there and Boothalinga Iyer's signature is revealed under another signature. As the judge is handling the paper over, a sunbeam from the ceiling falls on the paper and that is how, under the light, the signature of Bhoothalinga Iyer is revealed. This proved Govindan Nair's innocence. The author comments, "Normally the story should have stopped there. But is life normal ? Is the cat in the court normal ? Is death normal ? Is Shantha's life with me normal (she not married to me and such a wife) ? And Saroja such a married spouse (and living far away where the Dutch once landed), and she keeping Vithal and telling him : 'Your father is no father. Your real father is the sun. Worship him.' Are the wars normal ? And the one plus one that makes two is that normal, tell me ? What then is normal ? My new baby is normal. He feeds on his mother's breasts and for the rest he sleeps or cries. Usha looks after him as if it were her own child. So Pai in the end lives with Shantha, his mistress, and his wife, Saroja, lives in a village with her son.

The plot is thin, disjointed and discursive. There are many absurdities and crudities. There are too many and too long philosophical discussions on a variety of subjects. Raja Rao is not at his best in this novel. However, the novel has its strong points too—its command over language, and its assimilation of philosophy and metaphysics into the very structure of the novel. In this connection **Narasimhaiah** writes "Here is a major manifestation of the possibilities of a foreign language in the hands of a master, who, though not born to it, has acquired a rare inwardness which effects its own transformation as the caterpillar transforms itself into a butterfly. It is an Indian's use of the language, the kind of English spoken and heard in the streets and government offices in India by half-educated and ill-educated Indians who have read their Shakespeare and *The Vicar of Wakefield* and put them to many uses—ordinary and lofty. One of these uses is what we predominantly find in *The Cat*—the kind of English that can embody folk wisdom for purposes for which the vernaculars are used obliquely, ambiguously. Here is the full maturing of the process set in motion in his first novel *Kanthapura.* While in *The Serpent and the Rope*, the intellectual pre-occupations did not always get accommodated into the structure of the novel, and often stayed out of it, thus exposing the author to uncritical attack for considerable bits of unassimilated philosophy and metaphysics, here in *The Cat* the abstractions have invariably found their concrete equivalents, thanks largely to the symbolism and the allegory which have transmuted abstractions into felt sensations. The cat, the wall, the ration shop, the scales, the accounts, are all symbols, but also facts which make incidents and episodes which form the stuff of the story. *The Cat* is in that sense the most mature of his novels—Raja Rao has found in it the most adequate concrete equivalent of a profund vision of life which has its validity not only for the contemporary Indian situation, but for our entire fragmentary civilization.

His three novels, taken together, help to establish him as a major novelist of our age, quite extraordinary for one whose total output to date, is less than a thousand pages in print.

5

Short Stories of Raja Rao

His Greatness in the Field

Raja Rao's greatness as a novelist no longer needs any assertion. To-day he is universally recognised as the greatest writer of fiction writing in English. However, his greatness as a writer of short stories is not so well recognised. It is yet to be realised that even as a short story writer he holds a unique place and has made outstanding contribution in this field also. Immense is the range and variety of his short stories. He deals with different levels of consciousness and with every aspect of life. The timeless and the temporal, the metaphysical and the social, local, national and international are of equal interest to him. He has thus enlarged the scope of the short-story, fashioned a suitable medium of expression for it, and thus made it a part and parcel of the main-stream of Indo-Anglian literature.

His Short Stories : Two Categories

Raja Rao has been writing short stories all through his career. The earliest collection of his short stories *The Cow of the Barricades*, 1947, contains nine stories written in France during the early period of his carrer from 1930 onwards. The novelist is yet learning his craft, and his early social and political concerns are much in evidence. The stories written after 1947 have been brought together in the collection entitled *The Policeman and the Rose and Other Stories*, 1978. It is feared that many more stories have been lost in various magazines in which they were first published, and much patient effort would be needed before they are re-discovered, collected and published. These later stories reflect the metaphysical and religious concerns of the writer of *the Serpent and the Rope*. In these stories there is a frequent mixture of fantasy and realism, as is also in evidence in *The Cat and Shakespeare* and *the Cow of the Barricades*.

In short, Raja Rao's stories fall into two well-marked categories and groups belonging to two distinct periods of his carrer. A brief consideration of a few of the more significant stories from each group will fully bring out the salient aspects of Raja Rao's art and enable us to form an idea of his greatness and contribution.

Early Stories

(1) Javni : To the first group belong such remarkable stories as *Javni*, *Akkyya*, *Narasiga*, *and The Little Gram Shop*. The story *The Cow of the Barricades* which supplies the title to this first collection, and *Nimka*, are transitional in nature, and herald the much maturer Raja Rao of the second phase. In *Javni* and *Akkyya* the novelist's sociological concerns are uppermost. *Javni* has been a great favourite with the anthologists and is one of his more popular works. It deals with the suffering and the misery of the under-dog in Hindu society. Its chief interest arises from the vivid and sympathetic presentation of the central figure, Javni. There is no plot or romance or adventure, and the story sustains our interest by presenting the character of a simple, shy and suffering woman of the lower classes of South India. It is obviously a story of character and social background. Incidentally, it depicts the happy domestic life of educated Indians of middle class. The brother and sister in this story are ideal in their mutual love and affection. It is indeed when we contrast Javni's plight with this domestic harmony and peace that we realise the pathos inherent in her life. The author has chosen significant details of social life of an Indian village—its intrigues, scandals, superstitions, prejudices, preferences and its traditional religious faith. The village atmosphere has been skilfully evoked by light, skilful touches, and by the selection of significant details Javni is presented as *the Feminine Principle* or *Shakti*. Again and again it is suggested that she is an organic part of nature, one with nature's objects and forces. The end of the story is pathetic and heart-rending, remarkable for so young a writer.

(2) Akkyya : Akkyya, the heroine of the story of that name, is also a symbol of self-effacing, Indian womanhood. Through it the novelist has focussed attention on the wretched plight of widows in Hindu society. She had become a widow at a very young age because she was married to an old husband and then her entire life was passed as a dependant in her brother's family, doing all household chores and looking after children with selfless devotion. Akkyya's girlhood with all its hopes tells a different story. Akkyya was a pretty little girl, full of charm and intelligence. When she was five she had already begun to discuss the holy scriptures with her father, and her horoscope foretold a most brilliant marriage. But she was very fond of children and luckily in their household, God always supplied her with orphan children and she looked after them as if they were her own, till she died. The stark realism of the story is touching in its photographic sincerity. Says **C.D. Narasimhaiah**, "Woman here is far from being idealized : with all the senility, stink and stench of disagreeable old age and rendered worse by the callousness of brothers and brother's children, neglected in life and neglected in death, Akkyya is the most excruciating example of the impending disintegration of the family ties which have held Indian society from the very dawn of history, but today when the country is on the threshold of a technological era, characterized by what social scientists call counter-culture, a near-relation in a family can well run the risk of dying with no decent funeral, much less the necessary ceremonies. The story enacting her life and death, tells the author quite poignantly, may be the only funeral ceremony that unaccommodated man or woman is destined to have in this traditional society. What the author bemoans is as much the tragedy of life as the break down of old values which once gave stability to Hindu society."

(3) The Little Gram Shop : *The Little Gram Shop* is again a domestic story depicting the misery and silent suffering of the wife in a Hindu middle class family. It is a story depicting extreme degradation and brutality. The proprietor of the gram shop is a Gujrati Bania, Motilal by name, who ill-treats his wife, beats her frequently and makes life a hell for her. The poor wife suffers all silently, for suffering is the lot of womanhood. She has nowhere else to go for her mother is dead. But *nemesis* soon overtakes the much hated bania. His son Chota runs away with a woman and so brings disgrace on his head. Finally, we find Chota's mistress presiding over the gram shop and living with another man. "Within the limits of a short story the writer has deftly condensed the lives of three generations from grandfather to grandson so as to suggest that a curse was on the family. Motilal's grandfather squandered his property among his ten concubines ; Motilal himself died of a road accident in his greed for money ; and his son Chota inherited his full share of the vices of both his great grandfather and father, and the circle was complete when towards the end of the story we are intimated that Chota's mistress who had run away with another man with a mouthful of curses for Chota was seen presiding over the Little Gram Shop with the father killed and the mother and wife dead, himself unmentioned as though it mattered not whether he was alive or dead." **(Narasimhaiah)**

(4) Narasiga : While in these stories the novelist's sociological concerns are predominant in *Narasiga* and *The Cow of the Barricades* his political interests are uppermost. The Mahatma and the freedom struggle provide the background for both these stories. Narasiga is the story of an unspoilt shepherd boy who in traditional Indian style mythicizes Mahatma Gandhi as Rama, the divine hero of *the Ramayana*, and the alien ruler as Ravana. A devotee of the Mahatma, his only ambition in life is to sit at his feet, to be a Hanuman to an incarnation of Rama. Narasiga's is in his own way a spiritual quest.

(5) **The Cow of the Barricades** : *The Cow of the Barricades* is related to *Narasiga* in its theme but is more powerful in expression. In this story Raja Rao deals with the fight for India's freedom in highly poetical, almost mythical terms. Gandhism is the dominant theme and the Mahatma is in the background. The Master in the story, who is the prototype of Moorthy in *Kanthapura*, strives hard to cling to the path of absolute non-violence and goes into meditation to avert bloodshed. The people and the soldiers are ranged against each other. Then the compassionate cow, Gauri, moves on to the barricades between the two. "But when they saw the cow and its looks and the tears, clear as the drop of the Ganges, they shouted out, '*Victory to the Mahatma*', '*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*', and joined up with the crowd. But their chief, the red-man, saw this and fired a shot. It went through Gauri's head, and she fell a vehicle of God among lowly men."

"Gauri becomes the centre of a legend and it is said, Gauri is waiting in the Middle Heavens to be born. She will be reborn when India sorrows again before she is free. The cow in the story is the symbol of Mother India. The tradition and religion, mysticism and sacredness associated with the cow in India become in Raja Rao's hands the linchpin of a story about the spiritual regeneration of India. **(Verghese)**

(6) **Nimka** : It is to be noted that in both these stories there is that mingling of fantasy and realism which characterises the later Raja Rao. Gandhi is glorified and romanticised as Ram, and the Englishmen are spoken off as Ravan. Thus we have the use of the mythical technique of the writer of *Kanthapura*. *Nimka* is another story which heralds Raja Rao's coming of age, his maturity as a writer and thinker. Separated from the earlier stories by a gap of twenty-two years, the story still reveals Raja Rao's sociological concerns, his pre-occupation with the oppression and suffering of the under-dog, but its art and technique are those of the writer of *the Serpent and the Rope*. It is the, "work of one who is already a major novelist and has learnt to range through countries, classes, ideologies and can look into the heart of darkness which nevertheless holds promise of the dawn. The story, because of its poetic treatment of the material, eludes easy identification with any period or movement. And what gives distinction to it is the sensibility of a master, here an Indian writer, who is no stranger in France or Russia, among the poor or the aristocracy. It is the story, "a very sad story of a beautiful young Russian woman, a mere waitress in a restaurant which paid her just enough for her and her mother's keep. But she was a princess to her student-admirers from the Sorbonne ; she loved an Indian whom she couldn't marry ; loved a Frenchman, broke his heart and married a Russian Count, twenty years older, and a widower who gave her a son, Boris, for whose sake the mother became a mannequin when Hitler occupied France, because the husband lost all his money on horses and ran away from her. Now

with her mother dead and the son not returned to take her to Russia, she was forced to sell that necklace which she had saved against all odds to open, as a last resort, a small shop to deal in food and clothing on which you cannot lose because they are essentials of life. But loss and gain never governed her life or thinking, indeed success was evil and what sustained her was goodness—the picture of Mahatma Gandhi—the voice that responds with every scrub of the floor, and with every cry of the child in the street, and knew the pinching pain of mankind. And she knew nothing wrong could happen to her.

Such is this heart-rending story, a very European story though suffused with Indian thought and precisely because of that tradition of story-telling what unsuspected range of material—social, intellectual, philosophic—this story can take in with expanding concentric circles of awareness, and the corresponding planes of reality, vertically arranged, each yielding a significance appropriate and unique to itself. **(Narasimhaiah)**

It begins as a social short story, but gradually its scope widens, it takes on different meanings, and can be read on different levels. It is the work of a mature artist, who has full command over his art, and can press into his service most varied material, and can range freely and at ease over the cultures of India and Europe. In this story, Raja Rao equals the art of the greatest writers, both English and continental.

The Later Stories

In the stories of the second group published in *The Policeman and the Rose*, 1978, it is the element of fantasy and metaphysics which comes to the forefront, and that of realism is pushed into the background. In *Companions*, *Khandesh*, and *Kanakapala, the Protector of Gold*, there is a mixture of the fantastic and the metaphysical. The fantastic is used to serve metaphysical ends. However, the best stories in this collection are *The Policeman and the Rose*, the title-story, *India, a Fable*, and *The Premierre of Shakuntla*.

(7) The Policeman and the Rose : The author has called *The Policeman and the Rose* "pure fiction" and has sub-titled it as "*A True Story*". The symbolism in the story is complex, personal, and so difficult to follow. The rose is a well-known symbol, and Raja Rao has used it effectively and also added to its meaning. But what does the Policeman stand for in the story ? For soul ? Guru ? God ? the transcendental principle ? Is it evil or (since it is an Indian name from Ramayana, Ravana ?) Ignorance ? Otherwise, why is Ravana termed a police jamadar ? Then, how is he different from the Police Commissioner in Travancore ? And then, if everyone is arrested by the policeman as soon as he is born, is he different from him whom he arrests ? What then is the meaning of the following passage ?

"Every living man has a policeman, and his name is your name, his address your address, his dreams your dreams. In the last life too he was a policeman—he always was a policeman". Thus there is much vagueness, ambiguity, even obscurity, about the Policeman, and the readers are baffled and perplexed, till they realise that most probably Policeman symbolises the law of *Karma*, and so when the policeman arrests you, you are free. However, even this does not solve all the difficulty, and the ambiguity persists upto the very end. However, there is also much in the story which is of great artistic merit. Says Narasimhaiah, "*The Policeman and the Rose* suggests the themes of *The Serpent and the Rope* and *The Cat and Shakespeare*, but in its evocation Raja Rao lets into the story much unassimilated material. In other words, artistically speaking, it does not share the excellence of *India : a Fable* with which it has affinities potentially ; much less can it be compared with *Nimka*, also a story of his later phase."

(8) **India a Fable :** *India, a Fable* is the finest story of the second phase. In it there is a curious mixture of fact and fancy. First we are given the facts and a concrete, real world is presented. The setting is provided by a park in Luxemburg on a fragile spring day : "old man with coughs and whiskers sat by the ponds reading newspapers ; fat women removed the kerchiefs and spoke garrulous words, the Sorbornard girls opened their blouses to let the cool air breathe down, and read romantic fiction ; and young men basked in the sun and slept. The children scampered all over the park." This is reality. Into this very concrete world the novelist introduces what at first appears to be play, rather it begins as fact and ends as "My Story". The author-narrator tells us he sat under (the statue of) Anne of Austria (1729-1787) big-headed, big-bosomed, some old tragic royalty bulging with posthumous importance. Thus he lets fancy play over fact and leaves it open-ended and makes one want to ask : "Did Anne die on this date ? Did she die at all ? Is it the question mark that belies it ?" The story deals with the doings of a small boy, a child of five or six, pink-skinned and clear-eyed, dragging a wooden camel along the path. It is set in motion by a simple, casual, patronising question and answer between the narrator and the child :

"Where are you going ?" I asked

"To the oasis of Arabia," he said and stopped.

"This is followed by further questions and answers, which rivet the reader's attention to two categories : camel, Arabia, sands, oasis, prince, princesses, horses of gold, is the one category, and elephants, India, forests, rivers, Maharaja, goddesses with four hands and crowns of gold, is the second. Arabia and India both are dream-pictures and the image of the journey by steamship suggests reality and fact. The two sets of pictures present a contrast, but as the story progresses the one becomes the part of the other in such a manner that the duality disappears. The image of the child touching the bottom of the pond is no more than a casual image, but when he steps into the water to look for his wooden camel, it can project a metaphysical meaning of ultimates. The Nanny who accompanies the child also experiences the ecstasy when she lets the young man kiss her. To the child it is a fable, but to the woman in the arms of the young man it is an exotic picture which her present mood conjures up and loses, as surely as it comes. It is necessary that the woman is cured of her illusions and the child is rewarded for his innocence as in a fairy tale. Both the planes are wrought simultaneously without existing apart, their coverage and their fusion is the work of the artist's vision."

(9) **The Premierre of Shakuntla :** *The Premierre of Shakuntla* repeats the same pattern with a daring disregard for history and legend. This is a story within story—a personal story containing within it the far-famed story of Shakuntla. The whole thing is conceived as a fantasy but its value consists in the rare but authentic, artistically that is, if factually incorrect or questionable, sidelights it throws on Kalidas' personal life, on his patron King Vikramaditya and his intellectual rivals in the King's court, and so much implicit literary criticism offered by one who is not a literary critic but a creative artist of our time with the practitioner's impeccable insights. It is a scintilating tale, "an enchanting reconstruction by a 20th century literary descendant of the great poet, the way he loved, lived, wrote, rejoiced, and realized the transience of it all in the larger scheme of things—the time-honoured Indian ideal of life—the *parama purushartha*, the supreme end, that which makes all else meaningful."

Conclusion

Such are the short stories of Raja Rao. The above account, brief and inadequate as it is, is still sufficient to bring out his range and variety as a writer of short stories. He has enlarged its scope and made the Indian short story in English worthy of the attention of the greatest masters. Certainly, we cannot agree with the view of Uma Parameswaran who says, "The stories are not worth republishing in book form. In *the Preface* he (Raja Rao) says apologetically that he accepts authorship of them because one ought not to disclaim one's children. Although the stories are not worth reading as stories, they are worth some attention as foils to his later fiction."

6

A General Estimate of Raja Rao as a Novelist

Or

Raja Rao : His Merits and Demerits— His Contribution and Achievement

His Pre-eminence

Raja Rao is one of the greatest of Indian novelists writing in the English language. Only two others—Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan—come any where near him. Though a close contemporary of these two stalwarts, he is entirely different from them in his art as a novelist, and in his enchanting prose style. This pre-enimence is surprising when we remember that the bulk of his published work is small. He has to his credit a collection of short stories, *The Cow of the Barricades and other stories* (1974), *Kanthapura*, 1938, *The Serpent and the Rope*, 1960, and *The Cat and Shakespeare*, 1965. His published work hardly covers one thousand pages, and yet he has placed the Indo-Anglian novel on the world map, and has achieved international fame and recognition. For his *The Serpant and the Rope* he won the *Sahitya Akadami Award*, 1966, and *Padma Bhusan* was awarded to him in 1969 by the President of India. World attention was at once focussed on it, and it was praised as a really magnificent achievement, and regarded as a great honour to English literature by eminent critics like **Lawrence Durrell.**

Evolution of His Genius : Two Phases

Raja Rao's work divides itself easily into two parts or categories. First, there are the works of the early period consisting of the short stories written in France and published in 1947 as *The Cow of* *the Barricades and Other Stories*, and *Kanthapura* also written in France and published in 1938. To the second period belong *The Serpent and the Rope*, 1960, published after a long silence of twenty-two years, and *The Cat and Shakespeare*, 1965. Many of the short stories which he contributed from time to time to various magazines and journals have been lost, but a few of them have been published recently (1978) as *The Policeman and the Rose and other stories*. His earlier and later works show different characteristics, still this division in for the convenience of study, for the germs of his later art and his later manner are to be discovered in his earlier work also. In literature there can be no watertight compartments, the hand of the master is discernable even in the work of the youngman of twenty-six writing in France thousands of mile from home. Considering his work as a whole one wonders at the amazing, "range of life as well as the levels of consciousness he has brought into the novel form, along with the creation of a suitable medium for his concerns which are at once timeless and temporal, metaphysical and social, immediately local but also international, so as to enlarge the frontiers of the fictional form itself and justify the name of an innovator in modern Indian fiction which, thanks largely to him, more than any other single writer, has been ushered into the mainstream of twentieth century literature." **(Narasimhaiah)**

The Early Phase

Short Stories : Their Greatness : His early work displays the social and political concerns of the 1930's. In his early short stories, *Javni* and *Akkyya* symbolise the silent heroism and selfless sacrifice of Indian womanhood. Raja Rao here highlights the wretched plight of the Hindu widow and other under-dogs of society. In *the Cow of the Barricades*, says **Srinivas Iyengar**, "Cow's mother-gait and silent tears are symbolic of India's, the Mother's, travail and the Cow's infinite patience and veiled power are symbolic of the Mother's genius for surviving her sorrows and transmuting them into the great joy to come." By the time of *Nimka* his art has already matured considerably. It is "the work of one who is already a major novelist and has learnt to range through countries, classes, ideologies and can look into the heart of darkness which nevertheless holds promise of the dawn. The story, because of its poetic treatment of the material, eludes easy identification with any period or movement. And what gives distinction to it is the sensibility of a master, here an Indian writer, who is no stranger in France or Russia, among the poor or the aristocracy. Raja Rao's art as a short-story writer is yet to receive full recognition and appreciation. *Certainly, it cannot be dismissed as a mere foil to his fiction, not worth much by itself*, as **Uma Parameswaran** *tends to do.*

Kanthapura : Its Greatness : His first novel *Kanthapura* is a classic of the Gandhian movement, a work in which the Gandhian struggle for independence and its impact on the Indian masses finds its best and fullest expression. It is also a great village novel, a novel with, "*the various facets of the village life, with its socio-economic divisions, superstitions, religious and caste-prejudices, blind faith in gods and goddesses, poverty, petty jealousies, dirty lanes, shady gardens, snake-infested forests, dirty pools, hills, rivers and changing seasons.*" *Kanthapura* in a microcosm of the macrocosm ; it is Indian in miniature. The novelist's style of narration makes it a *Gandhi Puran* or a *Gandhi epic*. The novelist does not write, "Babu English" but Indian English, an English eminently suited for the expression of Indian (or peasant) sensibility. He has tried to adapt his English style to the movement of a Sanskrit sentence. His style has the flavour of Kannada speech, and its rhythms are almost incantatory, the rhythms of Sanskrit, a language which is the source of Indian languages. *This evolution of a suitable style for the expression of Indian sensibility is Raja Rao's most significant contribution to the Indo-Anglian fiction.*

Another of his important contributions is the fusion of a Western art form with an Indian theme and the Indian way of treating it. He has followed the oral Indian tradition of story-telling and so the narration is digressive and episodic. As the old narrator's stream of reminiscence proceeds, there is a free mingling of fact and fiction, poetry and reality, the perennial and the present, and "*this makes 'Kanthapura' a distinctive novel, almost a new species of fiction.*" The use of the Eliotian mythical-technique enables the novelist to exalt Gandhi as Rama, to see *Bharat Mata* as Sita and the Red-man as Ravan. This mingling of Gods and men, of myth and legend with contemporary reality, is true to the Indian tradition of story-telling. This makes *Kanthapura* a Gandhi-pic, "*a veritable Grammar of the Gandhi myth—the myth that is but a translation of reality. It will always have a central place in Gandhian literature*" **(Iyengar)**

Literature as Sadhna : The Long Gap : Judged by any standards, *Kanthapura* is a major achievement but Raja Rao himself considered it confused and immature. *Kanthapura* was published in 1938, and after that there was a long silence till 1960, when he came out with his *The Serpent and the Rope*. In an interview, published in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* in January 1964, Raja Rao said : "*For me literature is sadhna—not a profession but a vocation*". This was so even when he wrote *Kanthapura*, "*but I was then a confused and lost person. And that was why I gave up writing for a long time.*" Then. after he had met his Guru, Sri Atmananda, he wrote *The Serpent and the Rope*. In other words, Raja Rao has a high conception of his own calling, he regards it as *Sadhna* or spiritual experience, and considers, like Milton and many others, strenuous preparation and selfless dedication necessary for it. According to him, one must be a *man* first, and a writer afterwards. By *man* he means a metaphysical entity, one who has realised the *Absolute Truth*. This truth can be realised only through a Guru, who is himself a realised being. After *Kanthapura* he gave up writing for a long time, for then he had not realised his spiritual entity. His vision of life is fully expressed in

The Serpent and the Rope. As he himself tells us, " '*The Serpent and the Rope' came as a result of spiritual fulfilment—that is to say it was born after I had met my Guru.*"

Later Phase

The Serpent and the Rope : Its Greatness : '*The Serpent and the Rope' is the fruit of Raja Rao's maturity, and Raja Rao was at once hailed as a pioneer in the field of metaphysical fiction.* One of the reviewers said that it is, "certainly an epic and could...have been a great novel. Even as it is, it remains a magnificent guide to India, and, for those who are prepared to work for their pleasure, a book to read and re-read." The reviewer in *the Times*, on the other hand, said succinctly : "It is rather as if the wisdom of Sanskrit had been done into story-book form...The writing is utterly beautiful. No other word will do." "To compare the small with the great (in terms of quality, that is not of quantity), if *Kanthapura* is Raja Rao's *Ramayana*, then *The Serpent and the Rope* is his *Mahabharata. If Kanthapura* has a recognizable epic quality, *The Serpent and the Rope* is more than a miniature epic—it is almost encyclopaedic in its scope." It reflects Raja Rao's stupendous learning, his mastery over a number of literatures, mythologies, philosophies and religions.

It is the work of a man who has taken all knowledge to be his province, and so its action ranges physically from France to South India, Allahabad, Hardwar and other places in India and then moves back to France and London ; intellectually, it constantly moves to and from over countless cultures, religions and philosophies. However, there is too much of philosophy and metaphysics. It is heavily over-loaded with discussions of subtle metaphysical problems which are often beyond the comprehension of the average reader. The novelist's 'philosophical garrulity' is a serious stumbling block in the way of the readers. **David McCutchion**, in his critique of the novel, asks : '*Is this a novel at all ?...All the central concerns of the Western novel are absent—social relations, psychological motivation, characterization, judgment, a passion for the concrete.*" As a matter of fact in this novel, "Raja Rao has moved from simple narration to complex analysis and metaphysical musings. *The Serpent and the Rope*, more clearly then any other novel, tells us the distinctive qualities of the Indo-Anglian novel and warns us that the usual standards of prose criticism cannot be applied to Indo-English writers.

The novel provides the finest example of the synthesis of the borrowed western novel-form and Indianness. The novelist has extended the scope of this westerns art-form by giving it a new subject matter, by using it as a vehicle for the quest of metaphysical wisdom or meditations on the nature of existence from the Indian point of view. The Indian Vedantic vision and the wisdom of age-old Indian scriptures—Vedas, Upanishads, *The Gita*, etc.—is woven into the very fabric of the novel, and may be seen as a more complex and subtle variation of the myths and legends, gods and goddesses that figure in *Kanthapura*. As **Srinivas Iyengar** tells us, "Never before has the subtle and tortuous mind of the cultivated Indian who is caught in the narrows of the ambiguous, agonizing present—the junction of the old and new, the East and the West—been presented so engagingly and excitingly in a work of fiction." In one of his sudden digressions, Rama, the hero-narrator, describes the novel as "the sad and uneven chronicle of a life, my life, with no art or decoration, but with the objectivity, the discipline of the historical sciences ; it is an attempt really to make the imponderables of inner life seem reasonably logical and concrete ; and it is, besides, an attempt—a bold, adroit, sustained attempt—to set the English language to a prolonged articulation of Indian or Sanskritic modes of thought and speech." At the very least, *'The Serpent and the Rope' is an ambitious and meritorious effort at achieving a total projection of India in vivid fictional terms* ; *and perhaps, it is the most impressive novel yet written by an Indian in English.*

The Theme : East-West Encounter : *It may also be noted that in this novel the theme of East-West encounter assumes a depth and validity never achieved before in Indo-Anglian fiction.* This theme has been concisely summed up by a reviewer, "In the marriage of Rama and Madeleine, two contrary world-views, two contrary epistemologies, come together, and the novel is a study of that encounter. In spite of their sharply differentiated attitude towards life, Ramaswamy and Madeleine have one striking similarity as characters : they are both intensely self-conscious about the epistemologies they represent. Hardly ever do they regard themselves or each other simply as individual human beings. Instead they are constantly interpreting their own and each other's actions in terms of their national and cultural differences, invariably ending up with generalisations about Indian and Western traits of character. According to **Meenakshi Mukherji**, "As the title suggests, the novel involves two ways of apprehending reality : the recognition of the object as object and the recognition that the object exists because the perceiver perceives it. The novel merely presents the confrontation of these two modes, but does not come to a definite preference of one over the other. Madeleine slowly excludes Ramaswamy from her life, and Ramaswamy brings his burden of infinite pathos back to India. And there is just a hint towards the end that in Travancore he might find a new mode of apprehending reality and a new meaning in life. With admirable restraint, Raja Rao has steered clear of the facile solution of concocting an easy assimilation of two cultures. If there is an enduring solution, it is a private solution, and may not yield its secret to any public discussion. Such a solution can be worked out only through a 'Guru' and it is hinted at the end that Rama hopes to find him in Travancore.

The Cat and Shakespeare : Artistic Decline

The Serpent and the Rope was followed by *The Cat and Shakespeare*, 1965, a novel of slender bulk in which critics in general have found evidence of a decline in Raja Rao's powers. The novelist calls it a *metaphysical comedy*, but invites the readers to weep at every page of it. The significance of the title does not become clear, there is not much of a story, and actions and reactions of the central figure remain vague and unrealised. It has baffled the critics and it has been called, "all too chatty and catty ; illusory non-plot ; Raja Rao is caricaturing himself ; a perfect mouse-trap ; who can say what's happening and what's not happening ?" The novel does tease the reader's understanding to test whether he is capable of going beyond mere intellectual comprehension and losing himself in the silences between Govindan Nair's speeches.

Raja Rao himself called it a sequel to the *Serpent and the Rope*, and asserted that it is not mere fantasy but based-on actual events. All Raja Rao's writing, says **Srinivas Iyengar**, "is part of Rajo Rao's *sadhna* or spiritual experience, and so *Kanthapura*, *The Serpent* and *The Cat* should be viewed as steps—or paths—towards realization. If *Kanthapura* could be described as a *purana*, as a *Gandhi Purana*, and *The Serpent and the Rope* as an *epic*, a *mini-Mahabharata* in the idiom of our age, then *The Cat and Shakespeare* is more like one of the longer *Upanishads*, part narrative, part speculation and part dialogue or discussion." Here the description zigzags rather then progresses straight on, the speculation is not so much analytical as a series of spasmodic lightninge flashes, and the dialogue is dialectical rather than an exchange of confidences. There are words, words, words, a whirl of words, but their true meaning is understood only when there is inner illumination, sudden flashes of lightning illuminating the dark and the unknown. This is the way of the *Upanishads*, and this is also the way of the *Cat and Shakespeare*.

Says **C.D. Narasimhaiah**, "While in *The Serpent and the Rope*, the intellectual pre-occupations did not always get accommodated into the structure of the novel, and often stayed out of it, thus exposing the author to uncritical attack for considerable bits of unassimilated philosophy and metaphysics, here in *The Cat* the abstractions have invariably found their concrete equivalents, thanks largely to the symbolism and the allegory which have transmuted abstractions into felt sensations. The cat, the wall, the ration shop, the scales, the accounts, are symbols, but also facts which make incidents and episodes which form the stuff of the story. *The Cat* is in that sense the most mature of his novels—Raja Rao has found in it the most adequate concrete equivalent of a profound vision of life which has its validity not only for the contemporary Indian situation, but for our entire fragmentary civilization."

Art of Narration

The art of Raja Rao shows a steady progression from *Kanthapura* to *The Cat and Shakespeare*. He is constantly changing, growing and becoming different. There is a constant evolution of his art and technique. Take, for example, his art of narration. In *Kanthapura* the narrator is an old grandmother, and her stream of memory forms the narration of the novel. Her narration is gossipy and chatty, she is garrulous and there are numerous digressions and episodes. There is much that is superfluous. She is a simple, unlettered grandmother, and her narrative style is the novel's crowning charm as also the greatest threat to its success. It is in the traditional Indian style of oral story-telling. Fact and fiction, poetry and reality, men and gods, mingle freely in her narrative, and the reality of the Gandhian freedom movement is imparted legendary or Puranic dimensions. The narration is chronological, the action moves steadily forward and there is no incoherency or confusion despite the too frequent digressions and episodes. Occasional touches of irony, or racy, native humour enliven the narrative.

In *The Serpent and the Rope*, Raja Rao's narrative technique is much more complex. Its hero-narrator, Rama, is a highly intellectual character at home both in Eastern and Western philosophy and metaphysics. His mind is a whirlpool of cultural currents and cross-currents. Hence the simplicity of the narrator in *Kanthapura* cannot be expected of him, neither would it be in character. Says **Srinivas Iyengar** in this connection, "Rama is dry-as-dust as well as a poet, he is terribly introspective and can also be detached when necessary and he is sensual at one moment and saintly at another. No wonder his way of telling his story makes demands on the reader though there are not wanting rewards as well. Scraps from his diary mingle with narrative, dialogue (which sometimes reads like a catechism), description and reportage ; he zig-zags disconcertingly in space and time, he mixes memory and reverie, he jostles recitation and speculation, he scatters with a seeming recklessness aphorisms, witticisms, cyncisms, scholarly jottings and gems of recapitulated song. Yet, in spite of all this riot of apparent irrelevance and irrepressible loquacity, everything—given, that is, the character, with the elements so tantalizingly mixed in him—seems to fit perfectly.

The action has a physical as well as a psychological aspect, and the psychological or inner action is much more important. The physical action has global sweep and moves to and fro between the East and the West. But it is, "the psychological action which is far more important and takes place really in the theatre of Rama's heart, mind and soul. We see places, men and phenomena as Rama sees them, we see the world and its movements as they are reflected in the mirror of his sensibility, we peer into the crater that is his mind at times, and we gaze—at rare moments—at the still depths of his soul, its vast sufficiency and total strength. So far as the novel is concerned, Rama is the reality, the rest is illusion."

Since the hero-narrator has assimilated myths and legends of different civilisations—and not of India alone as was the case with the simple, unlettered narrator of *Kanthapura*—he uses then with perfect ease to glorify, criticise or illumine the present. The myths of Shiva, Parvathi and Nandi, Radha, Krishna and Durvasa or the legends of Satyakama and Ramadevi, the princess of Avanti, of Jagnnatha Bhatta and Shahjehan's daughter or of Ishwara Bhatta's emphasising to his son Brahma Bhatta the importance of retelling of Rama's story every Saturday as well as the Chinese fable of Wang-Chu and Chang-Yi, or the classical myths of Demeter, Poseidon, and Ulysses, or the tale of Tristan and Iseult, all enrich the texture of the novel and illuminate its metaphysical theme. The vast complex of myths and legends thus becomes an integral part of the novel, just as in T.S. Eliots' *The Waste Land*.

Art of Characterisation

Raja Rao possessed in the highest degree the gift of creating living characters. His characters are not mere symbols, they are creatures of flesh and blood, compounds of weaknesses and virtues, like us. However, in *Kanthapura* the characters are not sharply and distinctly individualised for various reasons. *For one thing*, the novelist did not want to over-crowd his canvass. *Secondly*, his purpose was to depict a mass movement and its impact, and highly individualised characters would have diverted attention from such a depiction. The hero of the novel is Kanthapura or its people and attention has been focussed on their heroism and their suffering. *Thirdly*, he believed in the, "oneness of all", of God and man, of men and men, and of man and nature, and hence did not consider individual charcterisation necessary. But all this does not mean that he lacked the art of successful characterisation ; with a single stroke of the pen he can bring a character to life, and make him vivid and real. Such is the art of the novelist that even his minor characters have been endowed with life and vitality, and linger long in the memory. Their vitality arises from the novelist's close, first hand knowledge of the life and character of the rural-folk he has portrayed, and this makes *Kanthapura* a veritable picture-gallery, crowded with living, breathing human-beings.

In the foreground there are a number of major figures, with a host of minor figures in the background, taking part in the action and throwing the major figures into sharper relief. Moorthy, Ratna, Patel Range Gowda, Bhatta, Policeman Bade Khan etc., hold the front of the stage, and behind them we have such lesser figures as Rangamma, Narsamma, Venkamma, Dore, Ramayya, Nanjundia, Sommana, and many others, with their petty rivalries, jealousies and mundane concerns. These characters are drawn from all sections of village society—the Brahmins, the Sudras, the Potters, the weavers, and the Pariahs.

The characters in the novel are sharply divided into two groups. The Rulers (and their supporters), on the one hand, and the Satyagrahis (and their sympathisers), on the other. There are various-other divisions too : orthodoxy is pitted against reforms, exploita tion against sufferance, the planter against the coolies, the corrupt official against the self-respecting villager. There is skilful polarisation. Advocate Sankar has his opposite in advocate Seenappa, and Rangamma and Ratna are opposed by Venkamma. The characters, both major and minor, are imparted life and vitality with a single stroke of the brush, so to say. One of the most frequent devices used by the novelist to vivify his characters is the addition of tell-tale nicknames or epithets : Waterfall Venkamma, Nose-scratching Nanjamma, Front-house Akkamma ; Temple Rangappa, Coffee-Planter Ramayya, Patwari Nanjundia, Gold-bangle Somanna, Cardamon-field Ramachandra ; and there is, of course, Corner-house Moorthy who goes through life as "a noble cow, quiet, generous, serence, deferent and brahmanic, a very prince." These epithets describe sometimes the appearance, *e.g.* pock-marked Sidda; sometimes the profession *e.g.* rice-pounding Ranjamma ; sometimes the habit, *e g.* nose-scratching Nanjamma, and sometimes the location of the house, *e.g.* front-house Akkamma and corner-house Moorthy. Sometimes a whole character comes to life in one phrase : "Ironshop Inam Khan, gun in hand and fire in his eyes" ; and a whole social milieu gets summed up in "kitchen queen" for the Indian woman. Even the huge locomotive is seen as a living, kicking giant ; "the train sneezed and wheezed and snorted and moved on". At other times telling images are used to vivify a character. Thus Moorthy is likened to a cow and to an elephant.

Character-traits are highlighted and thrown into sharp relief by contrast. The minor characters, for example, serve to highlight the major ones. The character of Sanker is impressive only because he is not like other advocates who had no sense of discrimination and lacked in any sense of patriotism. His love for Khaddar, Hindi and truth is exaggerated to the extent of looking ridiculous, but it is this that distinguished him from the other greedy, snobbish and shallow advocates. This is stressed by contrast with the meanness and greediness of Advocate Seenappa. Similarly, Waterfall Venkamma condemns the whole world specially the progressive elements of the village. It is against her meanness, frivolusness and conservatism that the character of Ratna shines out.

In *The Serpent and The Rope* characters are much more complex, and more varied. Its hero-narrator, Rama, is man of great literary culture. He knows many languages and is at home in many philosophies, mythologies and literatures. His concerns are metaphysical and he is concerned with the assertion and exposition of the life-giving Vedantic vision. Naturally, the characters have greater depth and subtlety. As **Prof. Harish Raizada** points out, "He is no more concerned with delineating characters in their private aspects. He now portrays them in relation to the broader and more impersonal objects that occupy mankind—their relations to public affairs, philosophy, art and religion". In *Kanthapura* he had shown a discerning eye for the surface personality of his characters. He could visualise their outward idiosyncrasies vividly and unerringly, their manner, their charm, their tricks of speech. In *The Serpent and the Rope*, he realizes the psychological organism that underlies speech and manner. With his lucid knife edged mind he penetrates beneath the external impressions to discern the peculiar combination of qualities that go to make up their conduct and individuality. There is also a greater variety of characters in *The Serpent and the Rope* than in *Kanthapura*. Characters are here drawn from different races and nationalities and they are all real and alive.

Women Characters

In the end, a word may be said about Raja Rao's women characters. Raja Rao sees woman as *Shakti* as *Mother-Earth* and the theme of *Shakti-worship* runs through his novels. Writes **Uma Parmaswaram** in this connection, "Voluble, with an infinite capacity for love and for passing malice, quick to spark into enthusiasm and into cynicism, the women of Kanthapura are more human than those created by Raja Rao elsewhere. They become woman at certain times, but there is no incongruity between their actions and the author's claim. One realizes that the immanent *Shakti* rises in every woman at certain pivotal points of life."

"Different forms of *Shakti* are manifested through the women of Kanthapura. Shakti's indomitable spirit possesses them in their Satyagraha (non-violent) procession against the British government. When the police ill-treat them with their sticks and boots, the women think, move, and act as one for they are one. Inspired by Gandhi they became the very incarnation of *Shakti*, and they sing :

There is one Government, sister,
There is one Government, sister.
And that is the Government of the Mahatma.

More distinct and pervasive in the devotional aspect. Woman as the Eternal Devotee, *Shakti* kneeling in rapt adoration in front of *Siva*, reveals herself through them as they listen to Jayaramachar retelling epic stories and to Ramakrishanyya reading passages from the scriptures. The most touching example of their edifying faith is the narrator's musing on the ruins of Kanthapura. She dreams of a happy ending to a modern *Ramanyana* where Rama (Gandhi) will return from his exile (visit to England) with Sita (India) who had been captured by Ravana (the British) and as he returns to Ayodhya (Delhi) Bharata (Nehru) who has been reigning as regent will welcome him and there will be celestial flowers showered upon his aerial chariot."

From the simple-hearted, loud-mouthed, easily-enthused women of *Kanthapura* to the reserved, cold, intellectual Madeleine of *The Serpent and the Rope* is a big leap. There are a number of women characters and each one of them expresses one aspect or the other of

Shakti. Ram addresses the woman in each of them, all of them are one and the same, the incarnation of the feminine principle. Saroja,. Savithri, Madeleine and the Little Mother are at different times, different facets of *Shakti.*

Raja Rao's Style : Use of English

Raja Rao's most significant contribution to the Indo-Anglian novel is the evolution of a suitable medium for the expression of essentially Indian sensibility. Sometimes he uses direct literal translations of Indian or Kannada proverbs, idioms and phrases, but this device is never over-done, as is the case with Mulk Raj Anand. His pages are never disfigured by the too frequent use of literal translations of Indian (Punjabi) proverbs and abuse words. For exemple, in *Kanthapura*, the village women speak of the cat that has, "*taken to asceticism only to commit more sins*". Raja Rao's use of this device is always in character. Such proverbs used by the old-narrator are entirely appropriate to her, and do not sound artificial or unnatural in the context in which they have been used.

And Raja Rao never uses them too frequently. But sometimes he uses expressions which are obviously not English and which have also no counterpart in *Kannada.* It is a falsification of language and is a serious fault. For example, "He gave her a very *warmful* bed" ; the old man was sitting on the Verandah, "his hand upon his nose, deep *breathful* of meditation," However, such expressions are much less frequent in him .than in novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharia. At other times, he uses words from the Indian languages directly in English without any translation or modification. But he realised that the English language can stand a very small dose of this device, and so he uses, it very sparingly. He uses it only for words like *kumkum* or *arathi* (which are really Sanskrit and, therefore, intelligible to most Indian readers) more for the sake of clarity than for any special effect. Nor does he use exclamations in Kannada. The flavour of Kannada comes out of the unobtrusive use of Kannada figures of speech and terms of reference. The following sentences taken at random from *Kanthapura* illustrate this point :

(1) *Postman Subbayya, who had no fire in his stomach, and was red with red and blue with blue……*

(2) *You are a Bhatta, and your voice is not a sparrow voice in your village and you should speak to your people and organize a Brahmin party. Otherwise Brahminism is as good as kitchen ashes…*

(3) *…and mother and wife and widow godmother went to their lighted lizard-clucking homes.*

Writes **Meenakashi Mukherji,** "The important point in these three instances is not that the expressions used are literal translations, but that they serve their purpose in their context, and they are more vivid than any other accepted English expressions that might have been used in their place. In quotation 3, the word, "lighted lizard-clucking homes" for example, convey a completely satisfying sense of security associated with the interior of a house after lighting time which is essential to these women (mother and wife and widow godmother) who have spent a long and uncertain day of struggle, picketing toddy-booths. Moreover, these sentences contain nothing that would be unintelligible or jarring to the reader who does not know Kannada, and that is more than what can be said about the linguistic experiments of most other Indo-Anglian writers."

Raja Rao uses English like a master, as one would use one's own mother tongue. English syntax and structure are modified and broken to suit his purposes. S. **Nagarajan** writes in this connection, "Raja Rao's aim is to create a style which will reflect the rhythms and sensibilities of the Indian psyche, and since it is in Sanskrit that the Indian mind has found its most consummate linguistic expression, he has tried to adapt his English style to the movement of a Sanskrit sentence." Only his words are English, their organisation is Indian and entirely his own. His use of English is marvellously and truly creative". Says **Narasimhaiah,** "the emotional upheavel that overtook Kanthapura could only find expression by breaking the formal English syntax to suit the sudden changes of mood and sharp contrasts in tone, by establishing a correspondence between perceptions and the images he could readily lay his hands on in the life around and by a fresh emphasis on old images and a completely different, in this case Kannada, intonation to English sentences. In other words it had to be a highly original style, a technical innovation indistinguishable from an essentially Indian sensibility. Consider the wide range of feelings and attitudes from the behaviour of an Indian crowd. First, under police atrocities :

"While policemen beat the crowd this side and that side and graons and moans and cries and shouts and coughs and oaths and bangs and kicks are heard, while there is heard 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai, M...ki...jai'." The massing of words corresponds to the massing of men in a crowd and the massing of upsurging emotions in response to police treatment.

But a temple atmosphere is different, though there will also be a flow of men to and from the temple :

'People came and people went ; they banged the bell and touched the bull and took the flowers.'

Is it a devotional prayerful approach to the goddess ? Well, it sounds like a prayer in our own languages, so intimately personal and fervent :

'O Kenchamma. Protect us always like this through famine and disease, death and despair. O most high and bounteous. We shall offer you our first rice and our first fruit and we shall offer you saris

and bodice cloth......' This has close affinities with poetry, indeed sounds like the chanting of hymns, approximating *mantric* poetry.

And what a far cry from this to the lingo of the cartman : *Heho, cries the cartman and the bulls shiver and start*'. Or the vigorous, musical counting of measures of rice or ragi in the villages :

'*One, two, three, Hm—Four Hm, Five, and the superstition which forbids the mention of six* (in some parts of the country) *seven and so six becomes "God's extra", Hm.*

Now the more intimately used language of the dinning hall : '*Take only this much milk, just this much, or Take it Bhattre, only one cup more, just one*'. Just consider what the English equivalent would have meant for a people like us who need coaxing : '*Won't you have a second helping* ?' would not merely be annoying but ineffective.

One step down and the whining, cringing peasant or pariah woman who comes to Bhatta for a loan :

'*Learned Maharaja, anything you deem fit.*' To an innocent English or American readers, *Learned* and *Maharaja* would be quite baffling like the simple, "Learned One has come." The "learned one", indicating only the socially or officially superior one. Sometimes a question hardly elicits any corresponding response : '*How are you* ?' '*Thank you*' would make no sense and to employ it in conversation is to strike a false not. Here in the novel the question brings out, '*Like this, you see*' —so much remains unsaid in older societies and one has to view it in that light.

Similarly, it would be absurd for a poor peasant to be known by his initials, but names become descriptive :

The *bent-legged* Chandrayya ; *waterfall* Venkamma, *Front House* people ; *Fig House* people, *Nine-beamed house* Range Gowda, etc., etc.

It would be most disrespectful to call the First Brahmin anything but Bhatre or Moorthy anything but Moorthappa, especially when there is a difference in social or official status. But the status which birth, wealth and society confer on Bhatta don't stand him in good stead spiritually. And here is the homely equivalent of, "*Not all the perfumes of Arabia can sweeten this little hand*" : "*The sinner may go to ocean but the water will only touch his knees*". This, bespeaks a distinct Indian sensibility—water as a time honoured symbol of purification and the vivid image of the insufficiency of an ocean of water to wash this man's sins away, both the symbol and the image conveying an immediate comprehension of all they stand for to the illiterate villager. Consider again the equivalent of, "*One swallow does not make a summer*" : "*A cock does not make a morning nor single man a revo-*

lution," where the first half with its homely familiarity helps illumine a new formulation, alien to the Indian ethos but thanks to the juxtaposition of the familiarly Indian, the new and the different are at once absorbed into our own consciousness as into our linguistic patterns, thus extending the frontiers of both. Where the sensibility is different, unless the expression also is different from English—the experience itself does not come through. Where the Englishman says, '*nip it in the bud*', Raja Rao perhaps because of its aesthetically offensive imagery in the Indian context, has recourse to the Indian idiom, "crush it in the seed," which will not fail to have its startling effect in an agricultrual community."

Lastly, a word about his plastic use of the English language to describe the ever-enlarging spheres of our relationships. For example, "He is my wife's elder brother's wife's brother-in-law", both because the word *cousin* doesn't convey the precise nature of the relationship and because our relationships do not stop with cousins or brothers- and sister-in-laws. But expressed in English it helps one to see the humour implicit in the change slowly coming over Indian society of dwindling social responsibility. The vagueness of these extended relationships is offset by the terms of endearment used to qualify the near one, as in '*our* Seetharamu', '*our Moorthappa*',—in both cases, a literal translation of the Indian idiom.

Imagery : Raia Rao's use of Imagery is equally distinctive and creative. His use of images is functional and not merely decorative. His similes and metaphors are drawn from the common, everyday objects and phenomena, hence they serve to clarify and elucidate. Writes **Meenkshi Mukherji**, "Images and metaphors are his natural mode of expression, and very little influence of English literature is discernible. His earlier work was full of fresh perception and a first-hand response to life. His language in the first two books is so richly strewn with similes that any passage quoted at random will serve to illustrate this element of his style. Consider, for example, the following from *Kanthapura* :

> *...and when Moorthappa comes let the rice be fine as filigree and the mangoes yellow as gold, and we shall go out, horn and trumpet going before us and break coconuts at his feet.*

The imagery here touches upon objects and experiences that are distinctively Indian, and faithfully conveys Indian sensibility."

Style : Two Phases of Development

Raja Rao's style shows two distinct phases of development. In the earlier phase (in *Kanthapura* and *The Cow of the Barricades*) there is a fond dwelling upon the concrete and the particular, be it the sky ("as blue as a marriage shawl," *Khanthapura*) or women ("some beautiful as new-opened guavas and the others tender as April mangoes, *The Cow of the Barricades*, or young boys ("Bright as banana trunks," *Kanthapura*) which is markedly absent in the two later books published after an interval of about fifteen years. In *The Serpent and the Rope* and *The Cat and Shakespeare* this concerete imagery is replaced by general reflections and abstract speculations.

V.Y. Kantak is all praises for Raja Rao's style and points out that his use of English has made us regain our faith in the Indian's "Creative use of English. His English seems to spring from the Indian scene, the Indian manner of gesture and speech, absorbs it, and yet suffers no distortion. Word, phrase or sentence structure, the shifts and the modulations—all grow from that root. And it is English, chaste English not borrowed and applied but taking the shape of the new material. The fluent, simple, prose has a harmony which is the fruit of a complete interpenetration of matter and manner. His early classic *Kanthapura* shows him at his best in this respect." Raja Rao has added a new dimension to his language, that of symbolic suggestion. "The language has shaken off all traces of foreign acquisition and has begun to assert its inalienable right as an independent idiom. The word has become the perception."

In *The Serpent and the Rope*, Raja Rao's style is more complex and sophisticated in keeping with its metaphysical theme and its intellectual hero-narrator. The concrete, sensuous imagery of the earlier novel is now replaced by general reflections and abstract speculations. The style is marked by sublimity and high seriousness. Quotations from Sanskrit, Kannada, Hindi and French verses are sprinkled here and there. The syntax and accent of the English language are changed to lend it the rhythms and the incantatory effect of the Sanskrit language. Aphorisms, paradoxes, clever inversions, and rehetorical expressions are very common in the novel as in the Vedic scriptures. To an alien critic like **David McCutchion** who is not familiar with the style in the Vedic texts, they might appear pretentious or irritating ("*We often suspect Rama is in love with his own cleverness*"), yet they are used to give "the effect of epic language" and rouse "the mind to a heightened state of participation in the metaphysical reflections". Rama, the hero-narrator, speaks for the novelist when he says, "The style of a man—whether he writes on the Aztecs or on pelargonium—the way he weaves word against word, intricates the existence of sentences with the values of sound, makes a comma here, puts a dash there : all are signs of his inner movement, the speed of his life, his breath (*parana*), the nature of his thought, the ardour and age of his soul. Short sentences and long sentences, parentheses and points of interrogation, are not only curves in the architecture of thought but have an intimate, a private relation with your novel, your genitals, the vibrance of your eyesight. Shakespeares, for ought we know, may have had hypertension, Goldsmith stones in the gall-bladder ; Dr. Johnson may have been over-sexed like a horse, just as Maupassat was a hypochondriac and Proust had to lie in bed with asthma, and weave out long sentences like he eked out a long curve of breath." This might be true in the case of the hero-narrator himself also, and his style might be the result of his consumptive lungs.

Raja Rao has an uncanny knack of aiming at natural dialogues. He changes their tone and style to suit his characters and situations. They are formal, intellectual and witty in Rama's philosophical discussions with Georges, Lezo, Madeleine and Savithri, while chatty and colloquial in his conversation with his family relations in his home town in India.

His Contribution

Mulk Raj Anand once expressed the view that Raja Rao's art as a novelist after *Kanthapura* has shown a sharp decline, for he has tended to use the novel form for, "philosophical essay, thus seeking to revive the *Yog Vasistha* method, with its pale cast of thought, obviously brooding on human destiny and exhorting men and women to seek salvation." In fact, this weakness is his real strength, his original contribution to the novel-from. According to Raja Rao "*the Indian novel can only be epic in form and metaphysical in nature. It can only be story within story to show all stories are parables.*" This is the technique he has followed and thus given a western art-form a distinctively Indian character.

Giving an estimate of Raja Rao's contribution to the Indo-Anglian novel **Uma Parameswaran** writes, "one might say he has given us a Blakean trilogy with *Kanthapura* as the *day of Innocence*, where man is sinless and protected, *The Serpent and the Rope* as the *Night of Experience*, where man in self-division and anguish nevertheless reaches out towards unity, and *The Cat and Shakespeare* as the eternity of *Higher Innocence*, where man is sinless and protected because he has become a little kitten held by the Mother Cat and thereby won for himself the kingdom of heaven."

Raja Rao is the foremost of those writers whose work has placed Indo-English literature on the map of world literatures. He has shown that the English language can be used successfully to convey the idioms and speech flow of the vernacular. He has successfully experimented with the novel-form and shown that this Western *genre* can be adapted to the episodic and metaphysical narrative tradition of classical Indian literatures. Most important, Raja Rao has proved that the novel-form, though intimately related to time and place at the narrative level, is also a medium for the expression of experience that transcends the limitations of geography and history. These are the most significant aspects of his contribution to a literature that started diffidently and apologetically as an imitation of English literature, but is now a literature that rings with confidence and individuality.

Political circumstances might change, and English might encounter hostility from vested quarters, but Raja Rao would endure both at home and abroad. His permanence is assured.

7

"Kanthapura" : The Historical Background

The Gandhi-decade

Kanthapura is a novel dealing with the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on a remote South Indian village of that name, and what happens in Kanthapura was happening all over India in those stirring years from 1919 to 1931 of the Gandhian non-violent, non-co-operation movement for the independence of the country. Gandhi does not make a personal appearance in the novel, as he does in Mulk Raj Anand's *The Untouchable* with such disastrous consequences, but he is constantly present in the background, and at every step there are references to important events of the day such as the historic *Dandi March* and the breaking of the *Salt Law*. Hence for a proper understanding of the novel it is essential to form a clear idea of the important political and social events connected with the Indian freedom struggle.

Early Patriots and Social Reformers

India's struggle for independence from the colonial rule of the British goes back to the war of 1857, which the British dismissed as a mere mutiny. The valiant Indian freedom fighters were defeated in their first war of independence but the spirit of India was not crushed. The battle for India's freedom continued to be fought on the social and economic fronts. Such enlightened social workers, reformers and teachers as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshav Chandra Sen, Swami Vivekanand, Shri Aurobindo Ghosh, Rabindra Nath Tagore, were only a few of the leading laminaries who brought about the Indian Renaissance of the late 19th century. They worked ceaselessly for the eradication of such social evils as child-marriage, *Sati*, untouchability, *Purdha system* and the exploitation and ill-treatment of widows. They waged a constant war against illiteracy, superstition, blind faith and orthodoxy. They highlighted the grinding poverty of the Indian masses who were being rendered poorer and poorer as a result of the economic exploitation on the part of their foreign rulers. In this way, these early patriots paved the way for the Gandhian struggle for independence of the early decades of the next century.

The Moderates : Demand for "Home Rule"

These social reformers all stressed the greatness and glory of India's past, particularly the uniqueness of her spiritual culture, and in this way contributed to the rise of nationalism and the spirit of patriotism. Western educated youngmen, while they copied the ways of the west, also yearned to be the masters of their own destiny and to free their country from the British yoke. There were also some enlightened Englishmen who were sympathetic to Indian aspirations, and helped and supported the cause of Indian independence. As the century drew to a close, the demand for 'home rule' gained ground. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was founded by an Englishman A.O. Hume. Indians like Surendra Nath Bannerjee, Feroze Shah Mehta, Dadabhai Noroji and many others voiced the Indian demand for 'Home rule'. These leaders were moderate in their outlook, for they were aware of the good which their contact with the Britishers had done to them in bringing about a political and cultural regeneration in the country. The division in the rank and file of the party was perceptible at the Surat Session of the Congress in 1907. The extremists led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak assailed the moderates and the session broke up in confusion. The Congress remained under the leadership of the moderates from 1907 to 1917, but it was evident from now on that it were the extremists only who really reflected the true sentiments of the people. Mrs. Annie Besant's demand for 'Home Rule', was in itself an improvement on the plans so far formulated.

The Use of Religion

Indian masses are deeply religious and so religion was freely exploited by Indian patriots all through the freedom struggle. The religious sentiments of the rural folk were fully exploited by B.G. Tilak, by introducing the *Ganapati festival* in Maharastra and instilling in them courage, patriotism, discipline and unity. Students were also persuaded to take part in these celebrations. The festival was used as a suitable instrument for educating the masses and making them politically conscious. Tilak also started *the Shivaji festival* in 1895 to encourage the Marathas to emulate their beloved leader. A new longing for liberty and a firm resolution for a united national Government were fostered by festivals like these. Athletic performances, patriotic and religious songs, *Kathas* and ballads were recited on a large scale, resulting in a sense of pride in the glorious and worthy past of India. It may be mentioned that religion is used in this very way in the novel. There are recitals of *Kathas*, and holding of *Harikathas* and festivals. It is under the guise of a procession of *Ganpati* that the people of Kanthapura try to make good their escape. *Religion played an important part in Indian struggle for independence, and so it does in the novel.*

The Advent of Gandhi : First Civil Disobedience Movement

It was the arrival of Gandhi from South Africa which infused a new life and vitality into the Indian struggle for independence. He had already acquired considerable experience in the use of non-violent non-co-operation as a political weapon, but it was in India that he perfected his technique and used it with such success. In the beginning, he co-operated with the British, and in this way sought to secure for India an honourable place in the British Commonwealth. During the war years 1914-1918, he made a forceful plea for extending all possible help to the British in the hope that after the war some measure of autonomy would be granted to the Indian people. His moderate approach incensed the extremists but he did not care for it. But when the war was over, the thankless British government did not fulfill the promises it had made to the Indian leaders. Instead there came the notorious *Rowlatt Act*, *1919*. The result was that the Mahatma gave the clarion call for Civil Disobedience, there was an upsurge of Indian nationalism and patriotism such as had never been witnessed before. Public meetings were organised all over the country and leaders like B.G. Tilak, Bankim Chandra Chaterjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, etc., freely voiced the demand for *Swaraja* or independence. In the beginning it was a demand for home rule under the patronage of the British, but it soon grew into a demand for complete independence. As public enthusiasm mounted, government repression also increased till there was enacted the tragedy of the *Jalianwala Bagh*, April 13, 1919, which sent a wave of horror throughout the country.

Suspension of the Movement

As the Gandhian movement continued, there were signs of increasing violence. It all culminated in the unprecedented violence of chouri-chaura. Gandhi was shocked, regarded it as a personal failure, and suspended the movement. This withdrawal of the movement, when national enthusiasm was at its height, offended a large number of staunch patriots, including Jawahar Lal Nehru. There was a temporary decline in Gandhi's popularity and the extremists within the party gained ground. The demand for complete independence, instead of dominion status within the British empire, was voiced by Nehru in his Presidential address in 1929 : "We stand for the fullest freedom of India. This Congress has not acknowledged, and will not acknowledge, the right of the British Parliament to dictate to us in any way."

Gandhi's Stress on Social Reform

In the meanwhile Gandhi continued to prepare the nation for the prolonged struggle which lay ahead before independence could be gained. He aimed at the total involvement of all sections of the Indian people and so launched a comprehensive programme of economic, social and religious uplift and emancipation of the Indian people. His programme of action was fourfold (*a*) Spinning of the *charkha*, weaving of one's own cloth and boycott of foreign cloth and other goods. *Swadeshi* and *Khaddar* were necessary for Sawaraja (*b*) Eradication of untouchability, and other social evils like the *purdah* system, so that women and the so-called lower castes may play their part in the freedom struggle (*c*) village uplift, eradication of poverty, illiteracy, castism, etc., and (*d*) Hindu-Muslim unity. In the novel Moorthy places this very Gandhian programme of action before the people of Kanthapura. Gandhi's stress was on truth and non-violence and this message was carried to the remote parts of the country by devoted Congress workers. Congress Committees were formed in every nook and corner of the country and satyagrahies were trained to carry out the programme at the call of the Mahatma.

Gandhian Movement : Its Second Phase

The second phase of the Gandhian civil disobedience movement began in 1929. This time the movement was more militant, though Gandhi still insisted on non-violence. There were meetings and stayagrahs all over the country. There were picketings and boycotts. Toddy booths and plantations were picketed, and there were huge bonfires of foreign cloth in ever part of the country. Farmers refused to pay land revenue. Then Gandhi undertook his historic march to *Dandi* beach to prepare salt there and thus break the unjust and anti-people salt law. He started with a few followers but thousands and thousands joined him on the way. The nation seemed to have gone wild, and there was violence at some places. There were frequent lathi charges and firings, and thousands including national leaders, like Gandhi and Nehru, were placed behind the bars. The people suffered and suffered terribly for the sake of their beloved *Bharat Mata*. Raja Rao has succeeded in capturing the thrills and sensations, as well as the brutality and suffering, of those tumultus days, when the whole nation, enthused with patriotism, was on the march.

Gandhi-Irwin Pact : Psychological Victory

The British government was shaken. Gandhi was invited to England for talks. He accepted the invitation and went for the *Round Table Conference* dressed in his usual lion cloth, and the result was the well-known *Gandhi Irwin Pact*. The pact left the Indian people dissatisfied. Even Jawaher Lal Nehru regarded it as a failure and the novelist has hinted at this dissatisfaction towards the close of the novel. But the pact was significant in many respects.

As **Louis Fisher** has put it in his book on Mahatma Gandhi, "The leader of the Nation had gone to negotiate on equal terms with the leader of another nation" and it was clear that "England could no longer rule India against or without Gandhi". Gandhi did two things in 1930 : "he made British people aware that they were cruelly subjugating India, and he gave Indians the conviction that they could, by lifting their heads and straightning their spines, lift the yoke from their shoulders. The British beat the Indians with batons and rifle-butts. The Indians neither cringed nor complained nor retreated. That made England powerless and India invincible." It is exactly such a psychological victory which the people of Kanthapura enjoy in the moment of their defeat. It was this very Gandhi-Irwin Pact which paved the way for the establishment of the Indian Federation, and the formation of Congress ministries both at the centre and the states. It was soon clear that the British government was on the way out, and independence was round the corner. The Indian people—like the people of Kanthapura—had to pass through an ordeal of fire, but as Gandhi himself taught, "Swaraja obtained without sacrifice never endures".

8

Preface to "Kanthapura": Its Significance

An Important Critical Document

Raja Rao has added a *foreward* or *Preface* to his *Kanthapura*. This *Preface* is an important critical document. It may be taken to be the manifesto of his artistic creed. It throws valuable light on his views regarding (*a*) style and Indianness (*b*) the use of English by Indians, and (*c*) the art of story-telling. Therefore, a study of Raja Rao, the novelist, must begin with a study of this *Preface*, which is a minor classic in itself.

Style—Indianness

First of all he considers the problem of style. The style used must be characteristically Indian. It must capture the tempo of Indian life. Indian's think quickly, talk quickly and walk quickly, and this quickness must be infused into the style of an Indian novelist writing in English. He must capture the very flavour of Indian life. Raja Rao has tried to impart this Indianness to his style by the use of characteristic Indian imagery, imagery drawn from the scenes and sights which are a part and parcel of Indian life, and not those which are of England and not of India. Often the idioms and phrases used are characteristically Indian and not English. The style is chatty and colloquial as it must be when in the Indian tradition the story is told by an old and garrulous narrator.

Raja Rao knows that in India every village is rich in local myths and legends, and there are frequent references and allusions to such myths and legends, *sthala-Purana*, as he calls them. As he himself tells us, "there is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich *sthala-purana*, or legendary history, of its own. Some god or godlike hero has passed by the village—Rama might have rested under this pipal tree, Sita might have dried her clothes, after her bath, on this yellow stone, or the Mahatma himself, on one of his many pilgrimages through the country, might have slept in this hut by the village gate. In this way, the past mingles with the present, and the gods mingle with men to make the reperatory of your grand-mother always bright." Raja Rao has made profuse use of such legendary and historical associations, the present is constantly glorified by juxtaposition with the past, and the simple and the petty is thus raised to epical heights.

Art of Story-Telling

Indeed, the use of the mythical technique is an important part of the novelist's art of narration. Indians have been great story tellers since times immemorial. Indian grandmothers and grandfathers, sitting cosily by the fire on long winter evenings, have narrated interminable tales for the benefit of their grandchildren. Their tales have tended to be richly reminiscent. With the passing of time outlines lose their sharpness and get blurred, and so fact and fancy memory and imagination, jostle each other in wild profusion. *Kathapura* is just such a tale. It is narrated by an old grandmother *Achhuakka* for the benefit of a newcomer, years after the events narrated in the novel had taken place. From her home in some distant village in Mysore, she remembers wistfully the events of those stirring days, and as the story proceeds much that is purely fictional and imaginary mingles with the factual. Memories grow dim with the passing of time, much is forgotten, and much else is unconsciously modified and glorified. The petty and the trivial acquires new dimensions and viewed in retrospect, events acquire a significance which they did not possess at the time. This is what actually happens as the grandmother *Achhuakka* proceeds with her narration.

Further as Raja Rao tells us, "And our paths are paths interminable. The *Mahabharatha* has 214,778 verses and the *Ramanyna* 48,000. *Puranas* there are endless and innumerable. We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous 'ats' and 'ons' to bother us —we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop, our bearth stops and we move on to another thought. This was and still is the ordinary style of our story-telling. I have tried to follow it myself in this story." This makes the narration episodic. One episode leads to another, and so the tale tends to be interminably long. There are many such disgressions and episodes in the novel. There is much superfluity, much that can be taken out without in any way injuring the story. The narration is characterised by verbosity and garrulity, right in the Indian tradition of storytilling. To stress this hoary, popular tradition, the novelist has not divided the novel into chapters. A gap in printing is used to indicate the end of a night's narration, so to say, and the second night's narration may be said to begin after this gap. The sentences, too, are interminably long, often only one sentence covering one full page. In this way, Raja Rao makes it quite clear that the novel is to be judged with reference to the time-honoured Indian tradition and not with reference to western techniques and Western theories of the novel-form. It is not a work of art, as are, say, the novels of Henry James, but an Indian tale told by a true son of the soil.

Use of English

However, the most valuable part of the *Foreword* is that in which the novelist expresses his views on the use of English by Indian writers. In this connection he tells us, "one has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up—like Sanskrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as a part of us. Our method of expression, therefore, has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it." Thus he explodes the idea that English is an alien or foreign language as it is often made out to be by vasted interests. It is not an alien language but as much an Indian language as any other. It is a precious heritage which has come down to us through the ages. As a matter of fact, Indians are all bilingual. They use two languages, one for the expression of ideas, and the other for the expression of emotions. English is the language of their intellectual make-up. For the last two hundred years, at least, they have expressed their thoughts, their ideas, through the use of English. Prior to that they used Sanskrit and Persian for this purpose. To-day, they can express their ideas, their thoughts, philosophical, scientific, economic etc., more easily and naturally, through English than through their own languages.

The difficulty arises when emotions are to be expressed. English is not the language of their emotional make-up. Emotions are expressed more naturally in one's own mother-tongue. To overcome this difficulty, Indians writing in English, must adapt their English so as to make it a suitable instrument for the expression of Indian sensibility. They should not try to write like the English. As a matter of fact, they can never write like the English. They must write like Indians. This truth must be realised by Indians writings in English. Raja Rao raises his powerful voice against the use of *Babu-English* or English as is used in Oxford and Cambridge. He makes a powerful plea for the adaptation of English language to Indian needs. In this way, would be developed a new dialect, a new species of English, Indian English. There is nothing wrong in such use of English, for it has been done in other English speaking countries, and we have American English, Australian English, Irish English, Canadian English and so on. Why should then, there be not an Indian English also ?

English is not to be rejected as a foreign language ; but it is to be adapted and Indianised. That is what Raja Rao himself has tried to do in the novel. His style is so unconventional because of his attempt to adapt in English the idiom, the rhythm, the tone, the total distinctness of the vernacular (in this context, *Kannada*) speech. This is not *Babu English*, this is not the English of the sophisticated Indians who meet in some exclusive club in Bombay, Calcutta or New Delhi. This is simply the natural speech of rural folk transmuted into English ; it is as though one sees a familiar landscape through coloured glasses. The colouring, the strangeness, is unavoidable, but it doesn't alter the essential truth of the things seen or the movements observed. The task was a difficult one, but it has been performed with rare success. In this respect he is the pioneer, the torch bearer, who lighted the path along which others must follow.

Conclusion

Thus in the *Foreword*, Raja Rao has highlighted some of the problems of the Indian creative writer writing in English, and he has tried to solve those problems in his own unique and individual way.

9

Characters in the Novel

(1) Moorthy, The Village Gandhi

Moorthy or Moorthappa is an educated youngman of Kanthapura. It is he who organises the work of the Congress in the village, and hence he is the central figure in the novel. But he has nothing heroic about him, nor can he be called the hero of the novel. He is an ordinary youngman, with common human weaknesses. He is one of those thousands of youngmen who were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi to give up their studies, risk the wrath of the government, and become fighters for the cause of their motherland.

That he is considerate and respectful is obvious from the affectionate way in which he is referred to by the people of Kanthapura. He is called "corner-house" Moorthy, "our Moorthy", Moorthy who has gone through life "like a noble cow, quiet generous, deferent, Brahminic, a very prince". He is considered to be honest like an elephant and is spoken of as "our Gandhi", "the saint of our village". He is the "small mountain", while Gandhi is the "big mountain". Throughout, he is shown as inspring love and respect and winning the confidence of the village folk.

It seems that the impact of Gandhi's personality has transformed him from a common village lad, into a youngman capable of leadership, and the self-scarifice and devotion which leadership entails. Of course, he has never come into personal contact with Gandhi. Moorthy was in college when he felt the full force of Gandhi, and he walked out of it, a Gandhi man. In those days hundreds and thousands of young men throughout the country gave up their studies and courted arrest and he is one of them. But the manner in which Moorthy walked out of the college is unique : he is said to have had, not an actual, first-hand experience of Gandhi by personal contact, but a vision of Gandhi addressing a public meeting and he himself pushing his way through the crowd and joining the band of volunteers and receiving inspiration by a touch of Gandhi's hand. And that very evening Moorthy went out alone and came back to college and walked out of it, for good. Says **Narasimhaiah**, "Now here is a perilous subject (very gifted writers have on this issue succumbed to the temptation of writing what the British or the American newspaper-reading public wanted to read of Gandhi) for a young author—he was just past twenty-five, himself deeply involved to the extent of being obsessed with Gandhism as well as his search for a Guru. Indeed the author's own self is projected, so largely projected in the character of Moorthy ; and considering the circumtances and the temptation, the identification of the young author with the young Moorthy appears to be inescapable, inevitable. Actually there is a good deal of idealization of the character he so much admires. From the time we meet him in the beginning of the novel to the very end of the book, Moorthy is perched at the top in his ascetic strength and his capacity for action comes as a surprise in a visionary like Moorthy. When Rama in *The Serpent and the Rope* cries out in agony '*Sivoham, Sivoham*' it doesn't sound sentimental because it comes at the end of a long exploration as something inevitable. But here when Moorthy says *Sivoham* before he is half-way through his life's journey, it is rather disquieting for it seems to have been imposed by the novelist on his yet unprepared character."

There is, no doubt, the novelist has endowed him with numerous good qualities of head and heart. He has extrordinary capacity for inspiring the people. On his return from the city he at once proceeds to organise the Gandhi work in the village. "*The Gandhian struggle for independence had three strands—political, religious and social (including economic)—and all these strands meet in Moorthy*. He works on all these three levels. Religion is the most potent force in Kanthapura, and so its action begins with religion. Before there is any mention of Gandhi or Swaraj, there is tremendous religious activity. Starting from an invocation to "Kenchamma, goddess", to the end of the novel, religion seems to sustain the spirits of the people of Kanthapura. The action begins with the unearthing of a half sunken linga by Moorthy and its consecration. The boys of the village hold a grand feast to celebrate the occasion. And one thing led to another. Soon they observed *Sankara Jayanthi*, *Sankara Vijaya*, etc., etc. When Moorthy threw out a hint that 'somebody will offer a dinner for each day of the month, there was spontaneous response from everyone and this is not stated by the novelist but comes home to us through the characters themselves : "Let the first be mine," said Bhatta ; "the second mine," said Agent Nanjundiah : "Third must be mine," *insisted* Pandit Venkateshiah. Note the verb *insisted* which suggests a willing co-operation in team-work ; and the issue of social prestige in a small community. Jayaramachar, the *Harikatha* man, is then invited to the village, *Harikathas* are held every evening, and these *Harikathas* serve as a clock for Gandhi propoganda. The Harikatha man is arrested and taken away, and so the Gandhi movement comes to the village.

It is Moorthy who organises the Gandhi work in the village, and he shows a rare devotion and insight for a village youth. He goes from door to door carrying the message of the Mahatma. It is he who explains the economy of the *Khaddi* and the importance of the *charkha* to the ignorant and superstition-ridden women of the village, and persuades them to take to spinning despite stiff opposition from all quarters. It is he who forms the Congress Committee in the village and is unanimously elected as its President. Even Range Gowda, the Patel, 'the Tiger' of the village, is defrential to him, calls him 'learned Master', has full confidence in him, uses all his authority and prestige in his favour, and permits him to have his way in everything. The women too must be enthused, and so Moorthy sets about organising them. A women volunteer corps is thus formed with Ratna as the head of this organisation of *Swayam Seviaks* or *Sevis.* Like Gandhi, Moorthy, too, undertakes a fast, organises picketing and satyagrahs, courts arrest and is sent to jail. Throughout, he is shown to be an ideal Gandhite.

However, the novelist was aware of the dangers of over-idealisation. Such idealisation tends to make a character incredible, unrealistic and unconvincing. But Moorthy is saved from such idealisation. One of the important planks of the Gandhian movement was the eradication of untouchability. Moorthy implements this programme and goes in the Pariah quarter from one college to another exhorting the women to take to spinning in their spare time. He is excommunicated by the Swami for this Pariah business, and his aged mother dies of grief and shock at the disgrace. Still he persists in his mission. But after all he is a human being, with common human weaknesses, and this Pariah business is too much even for him. He hesitates and falters and thus shows that he is made of the same common clay.

Writes **Narasimhaiah** in this connection, "It is here that the novelist's integrity as man and artist has asserted itself. It required remarkable courage and honesty to permit this idealized character to react the way he did in Pariah Rachanna's house. Here is Moorthy, a Gandhi man, who has preached brotherhood and equality and castelessness and abolition of untouchability. He calls Pariah Rachanna, "Brother Rachanna" but being a Brahmin (such is the persistence of custom) he will stand on the gutter slab in front of Rachanna's house and will want to talk from outside. With effort he now goes to see him. Rachanna is not at home. Rachanna's wife is pounding rice and encouraged apparently by Moorthy's professions and spectacularly liberal demonstrations, asks him in. It is a very trying moment for Moorthy—and for his creator ; it is something new and the novelist relates the distress felt by Moorthy with astonishing faithfulness to experience : 'and with one foot to the back and one foot to the fore, he stands trembling and undecided, and then suddenly hurries up the steps and crosses the threshold and squats on the earthen floor. But Rachanna's wife quickly sweeps a corner and spreads for him a wattle mat, but Moorthy, confused, blurts out, 'No, no, no, no', and he looks this side and that and thinks : surely, there is a carcass in the backyard and it's surely being skinned, and he smells the stench of hide and the stench of pickled pigs, and the roof seems to shake, and all the Gods and all the manes of heaven seem to cry out against him, and his hands steal mechanically to the holy thread, and holding it he feels he would like to say, '*Hari-Om, Hari-Om.*' But Rachanna's wife has come back with a little milk in a shining brass tumbler, and placing it on the floor with stretched hands she says, 'Accept this from this poor hussy' and slips back behind the corn bins, and Moorthy says, 'I've just taken coffee, Lingamma......' But she interrupts him and says, 'Touch it, Moorthappa, touch it only as though it were offered to the gods, and we shall be sanctified' ; and Moorthy with many a trembling prayer, touches the tumbler and brings it to his lips, and taking one sip, lays it aside."

To Conclude : Moorthy is a creature of flesh and blood, with ordinary human weaknesses. He is no hero, but an average youngman, who, like thousands others in those days, were enthused by Gandhi to come out of their shells and do their best for their motherland.

(2) Ratna, The Progressive Widow

Ratna is a young widow. She became a widow when hardly fifteen years of age. She is attractive and charming as is clear from the attention which Moorthy pays to her. There is just a hint of a love-affair between the two. However their love and liking for each other has not been properly developed, and hence *Kanthapura* lacks in that love-interest which is considered essential for a novel. We feel that the novelist has committed a serious error of judgment in not exploiting the love-theme and thus missing an opportunity of adding to the charm and interest of his work.

Ratna is a young educated woman of progressive views. Though she is a widow she does not dress and live in the conventional style of a widow. She wears bangles, coloured sarees (and not the white dhoti of a widow) uses the *Kumkum* mark on her forehead, and parts her hair like a concubine, as Waterfall Venkamma puts it. She is also bold and witty in conversation, and can hold her own against heavy odds. She is much criticised for her unconventional ways, but she does not care for such criticism. She choses her own path, and sticks to it with firmness and determination.

She takes keen interest in the Gandhian movement, and is a source of inspiration and help to Moorthy. When Jayaramachar, the *Harikatha* man, is arrested, she conducts the *Harikathas*. After Rangamma's death, she reads out the newspapers and other publicity material of the Congress for the benefit of the Kanthapurians. When Moorthy is arrested, she carries on his work and serves as the leader. She organises the women volunteer corps and imparts to the *Sevikas* the necessary training. She displays great courage and resourcefulness in the face of government repression and police action. She is dishonoured, beaten up and sent to jail as a consequence. But she suffers all patiently and unflinchingly. As the narrator of the story tells us, she comes out of jail a changed person, more humble and more courteous to her elders, but more mature and determined. When Gandhi goes to England for the Round Table Conference, reaches a settlement with the Red-man's government and the movement is withdrawn, Ratna is disappointed like countless other freedom fighters in India. She goes over to Bombay, and through her letters we learn of her great admiration for Nehru, "the equal distributionist".

Ratna stands for the educated, progressive womanhood of India whom Gandhi had enthused with his own ideals, and who came out of their homes in their thousands to fight shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk for the freedom of their motherland. She is the female counterpart of Moorthy, but the full possibilities of her character have not been brought out.

(3) Patel Range Gowda, the Tiger of the Village

Range Gowda is the Patel of Kanthapura, and as such a government servent. But he, too, is a Gandhi man and a staunch supporter of Moorthy. He throws all his weight and authority in his favour, and is of considerable help to him in organising the Congress work in Kanthapura.

He is a man of forceful, commanding personality, and wields considerable power and authority in the village. Because of his forceful personality and determination he is known as the 'Tiger' of the village. Nobody dares to oppose him or disobey his orders. As the narrator puts it, "He was a fat, sturdy fellow, a veritable tiger amongst us, and what with his tongue and his hand and his brain, he had amassed solid gold in his coffers and solid bangles on his arms. His daughters, all three of them, lived with him and his sons-in-law worked with him like slaves, though they owned as much land as he did. But then, you know, the Tiger, his words were law in our village. If the Patel says it, we used to say, even a coconut leaf roof will become a gold roof. He is an honest man, and he has helped many a poor peasant. And heavens what a terror he was to the authorities. If Range Gowda says 'No', you can eat the bitter neem leaves and lie by the city gates, licked by the curs. That's how it is with our Range Gowda." Nothing can be done in the village without Range Gowda. He is also kindly, sympathetic and generous, and does his best to help the poor, the needy and the suffering of the village.

This powerful man uses all his authority and influence in support of Moorthy and his cause. He realises the worth and integrity of the young Gandhite and is defrential to him. When Moorthy approaches him for help he says, "Do what you like, learned master. You know things better than I do, and I know you are not a man to spit on our confidence in you. If you think I should become a member of the Congress, let me be a member of the Congress. If you want me to be a slave, I shall be your slave. All I know is that what you told me about the Mahatma is very fine, and the Mahatma is a holy man, and if the Mahatma says what you say, let the Mahatma's word be the word of God. And if this buffalo will trample on it, may my limbs get paralysed and my tongue dumb and my progeny for ever destroyed."

Range Gowda speaks with the voice of authority and speaks with a forthrightness that no self-respecting man can withhold his co-operation. He says 'If you are the sons of your father, stand up and do what this leared boy says.' And Range Gowda himself proposes Moorthy for the Presidentship of the village Panchayat.

When Bade Khan, the policeman, approaches him and requests him to arrange a house for him he treats him with scant respect. Bade Khan tells him, "the government has sent me here, and I need a house to live in," and Range Gowda replies "Hm", said Patel Range Gowda, crossing the threshold on to the veranda, "a house. Well, you can look round and see. I can't think of one for the moment." He opened his betel-bag and carefully taking a tobacco leaf, he seated himself, and wiping the tobacco leaf against the dhoti, he put it into his mouth, then put an areca nut with it and began to munch. After a few moment", he looked up, then put a lime-smeared betel-leaf into his mouth and said : 'So you want a house, Police Sahib, I am sorry I have none to offer you.'

'You are the representative of the Government and I have a right to ask you to offer me a house.'

'Representative of the Government,' repeated the Patel, 'Yes, I am. But the Government does not pay me to find houses for the Police. I am here to collect revenue.'

'So you are a traitor to your salt-givers.'

'I am not a traitor. I am telling you what is the law.'

'I didn't know you were such a learned lawyer too,' laughed Bade Khan. But a final word, "Will you oblige me by procuring me a house or not ?'

'No, Police Sahib, I tell you humbly I cannot. I am not the owner of the whole village. But if there is anyone who is ready to offer you a house, please take it and turn it into a palace. I can see no objection to that.' He still munched his tobacco, and pasting the betel leaves with lime, he put them into his mouth and munched on.

'You don't know who your'e speaking to' Bade Khan grunted between his teeth as he rose.

'I know I have the honour of speaking to a policeman,' the Patel answered in a singsong way. Meanwhile his grandson, the little Puttu, came out, and he took the child in his arms and laid him on his lap and tickled him between the armpits to make him laugh. Bade Khan went down one step, two steps, three steps, and standing on the gutter-slab, growled at the Patel, 'the first time I corner you, I shall squash you like a bug'.

'Enough Enough of that', answered the Patel indifferently. 'You'd better take care not to warm your hands with other's money. For that would take you straight to the pipal-tree......'

The dialogue fully brings out the temper of the formidable Patel. He helps Moorthy in various ways. He explains to the people the significance of spinning and weaving, of non-violence, and of the value and meaning of independence. During Moorthy's period of imprisonment, he boosts the morale of the people, guides and encourages them, and sees to it that none falters and falls way. Without his active help and co-operation, Moorthy would not have been so successful in his mission.

He alone of the Kanthapurians ever returns to Kanthapura. It is he who brings to them news from Kanthapura. On his return from his visit he tells them, " 'All said in a knot', he conculded, 'theres' neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura, for the men from Bombay have built houses on the Bebbur Mound, houses like in the city, for coolies, and they own this land and that, and even Bhatta has sold all his lands, has sold it all to the Bombay men, and the Bombay men paid him well, and he's now gone back to Kashi. In Kashi, for every hymn and hiccup you get a ruppe," he said Waterfall Venkamma, it appears, has gone to stay with her new son-in-law, and Concubine Chinna still remains in Kanthapura to lift her leg to her new customers. I drank three handfuls of Himavathy water, and I said, "Protect us, Mother" to Kenchamma and I said, "protect us, Father" to the Siva of the Promontory, and I spat three times to the west and three times to the south, and I threw a palmful of dust at the sunken wretch, and I turned away. But to tell you the truth, Mother, my heart it beat like a drum". In this way he serves to round up the novel and it is in the fitness of things that it is with his appearance and with his words that the novel comes to an end. His dramatic appearance is like the fall of the curtain after the catestrophe.

(4) Bhatta, the First Brahmin

Bhatta, the first Brahmin, is the opposite of Moorthy—the agent of the British government, in league with the Swami in the city, to frustrate and defeat the Gandhi movement. According to Narasimhaiah, "He is one of the most interesting man in Kanthapura, and the novelist has given us a detailed account of his past, of his crooked nature, and the way in which he sets about doing the work of the red-man and opposing the Gandhi movement." If it a all there is any villain in the novel, it is he.

Bhatta began life with a loin cloth at his waist, and a copper pot in his hand, went on adding several acres of the peasants lands to his own domain. Today Bhatta means money and money means Bhatta and he charges 10 per cent interest and has gone upto 20 per cent interest even. The novelist who has a higher conception of the avocation of the Brahmin, the type of whom he sees in men like Ramakrishnayya of the older generation and Moorthy, of the coming generation, now witnesses his degradation in Bhatta—and yet he is the First Brahmin of Kanthapura. For with increasing prosperity Bhatta lost interest in his priesthood—a fine example of T.S. Eliot's cultural elite wanting to be the governing elite. It was so difficult to get him for an obsequial dinner or a marriage ceremony. The Brahmin who started with ascetic ways which he kept up for show assiduously laboured to acquire wealth and position and luxury and lived on exploitation of his neighbours, while he should have been promoting their welfare." **(Narasimhaiah)**

Bhatta is very learned in his art. Bhatta was always the first to reach the home of his host on a ceremonial occasion, say a death anniversary. He could make such grass rings and such leaf-cups. And it was also pleasant to hear him recite *the Gita*. Then would begin the ceremony, and such was Bhatta's skill that it would be over in the twinkling of the eye. The novelist gives a graphic account of one such ceremonial occasion. "Then the real obsequial dinner begins, with fresh honey and solid curds, and Bhatta's beloved Bengal-gram khir. 'Take it, Bhattare, only one cup more, just one ? Let us not dissatisfy our manes'. The children are playing in the shadow, by the byre, and the elderly people are all in the side room, waiting for the holy brahmins to finish their meal. But Bhatta goes on munching and belching, drinking water and then munching again, "*Rama, Rama, Rama-Rama*". One does not have an obsequial dinner every day. And then once the holy meal is over, there is the coconut and the two rupees, and if it is the *That-House People* it is five, and *the Post-Office House* people two-eight. That is the rule."

As **Narasimhaiah** points out, "Bhatta is an unworthy husband, too, what with his lack of consideration for his wife at home. On the days he dines out his poor wife has only dal-soup and rice. When the master of the house is out, better not bother about the meal : 'On the nights of obsequial dinners he eats so little, and she doesn't think of a dinner for herself and Bhatta has no thought of her. His wife dies and soon this middle-aged, pot-bellied priest marries a girl of twelve and half years old. What could he do ? Offers of marriage came from here and there.' There is dowry too : A thousand rupees cash, and five acres of wet land. And a real seven days marriage. And horoscopes agree marvelously—they are meant to, what with all the twistings and distortions and maneuvers of the learned priest. It is this same Bhatta who negotiates Advocate Seenappa's second marriage a widower like, Bhatta, with two teeth lost, marrying a girl hardly thirteen."

Bhatta's other social considerations hardly go farther. As for them, the less said the better : 'Bhatta was the only one who would have nothing to do with these Gandhi bhajans.' He wouldn't have the city troubles in Kanthapura, no annoyances. Besides, his business contracts he owed to Government patronage. He was also the Election agent and got two thousand for it. It is he who is responsible for the excommunication of Moorthy. It is he who keeps the Swami in the city informed of happenings in the village, incites the people against Moorthy and other Gandhites, and does his best to sabotage the movement. He sides with Bade Khan, sets afloat the rumours regarding Moorthy's excommunication and so hastens the death of his mother ultimately, he goes to Kashi to wash off his sins. Through him the novelist has exposed the greed and gluttony of the Brahmins, as well as the crooked ways of those who worked as stooges of the imperial rulers of the country. "He is symbol of usury and false orthodoxy and low cunning."

However, even Bhatta has been humanised. He is no unredeemed monster. He too has something good in him. He has his moments of magnaminity too. "Hadn't he sent our *Fig-tree House* Ramu to the city for studies ? Why should he have done that ? He said : If you will bring a name to Kanthapura—that is my only recompense. And if by Kenchamma's grace you get rich and became a Collector, you will think of this poor Bhatta and send him the money—with no interest, of course, my son, for I have given it in the name of God. If not, may the gods keep you safe and fit." The narrator's own comment, coming immediately after Bhatta's, helps to place the character in correct perspective : "*I tell you, he was not a bad man, was Bhatta.*"

(5) Bade Khan, the Policeman

Bade Khan, the Policeman, with his long beard, is a symbol of British raj. He is the symbol of British presence in Kanthapura. It is his duty to maintain law and order and put down the Gandhi movement, and it may be said to his credit that he performs his duty loyally and sincerely. The Gandhites may consider him a villain, but judged impartially, he is a loyal government servant performing his duty in very trying circumstances. He may be an instrument of the foreign government, but it would be wrong to dismiss him as a heartless monster of wickedness.

On arriving at Kanthapura, the initial difficulty he has to face is that of accommodation. Being a Muslim, he finds it difficult to find a house in the village. He can stay neither in the Potters street, nor in the Sudra Street, and, of course, the Brahmin quarter is out of bounds for him. Patwari Nanjundia is unable to help him. Then he approaches Patel Range Gowda, who receives him dryly, insults him, and then bluntly tells him that his business is to collect **revenue, and** not to go about hunting for houses. Poor, discomfitted Bade Khan then goes away threatening and cursing. He goes to Skeffington Coffee Estate, where a hut is allotted to him in which he settles down with one of the Pariah women.

Once settled comfortably, he moves about the village secretively watching the people, collecting information and passing it on to the city authorities. Very soon he is in league with Bhatta, and others who are opposed to the Gandhi movement. When Moorthy goes to meet the workers on the Coffee Estate, it is he who keeps watch and rains lathi blows on him, and his supporters, as he approaches the gate of the Estate.

In short, he is one of those unpatriotic Indians who made it possible for the British to rule India for such a long time.

(6) The White Owner of Skeffington Coffee Estate

Skeffington Coffee Estate is a very large coffee plantation at a stone's throw from Kanthapura. It is owned by a white man who is popularly known as the "Hunter Sahib", because he always carries a hunter or whip in his hand and freely uses it on all those workers on his estate who neglect their duty. He is a symbol of the imperialist rulers of India who exploited Indians in various ways.

A large number of workers are needed on the estate and they are recruited by his *maistri* or steward under false promises. They are brought to the estate from distant parts of Mysore. Promises of attractive wages are made. Visions of happy, comfortable life with practically no work to do are held out to them. The poor, ignorant people, deceived by such promises, march to the estate in large numbers : once they are in, the attitude of the steward changes and he becomes harsher and harsher in his treatment. It is said that one who enters the gates of the coffee plantation never comes out of it.

The coffee workers are exploited in many ways. They are given wretched one-room huts to live in which provide them little protection against the rains which are heavy and frequent. No wages are paid—they are deposited on their behalf with the 'Hunter Sahib', and they remain with him. Only the meagerest food is allowed to them. They are made to work from early in the morning till late in the evening, till it is dark. If there is any slackness or if they rest a moment, the *maistri* or the Sahib is always there to whip them. There is worst kind of economic exploitation. But this is not all. The workers are exploited sexually also. If the Sahib takes a fancy to any of their women, then she has be sent to his house at night, or he would even have her then and there in the plantation. No-body dares raise a voice against this exploitation for dire consequences are sure to follow any frustration of the lustful desires of the Sahib.

However, the Sahib is not all a monster of wickedness. He is not an unredeemed villain. He has also some good in him. His character has been humanised by showing the good that is in him. We find that he distributes peppermints and toffees among the children of the workers. The climate is damp and the outbreak of malaria is frequent. When the workers are ill, he goes from hut to hut distributing quinine tablets. It is anothor matter that the ignorant, superstitious workers don't take the medicine, and hence deaths are frequent. But the Sahib does what is best under the circumstances.

(7) The Swami

The Swami lives in the city. He remains in the background. Like Mahatma Gandhi he never appears on the scene. But he influences the course of action and causes much damage to the freedom movement.

He is an orthodox Brahmin, narrow and conservative in his views. He wields considerable influence with the orthodox, upper class people. Moreover, he is a traitor to the cause of the freedom of India. He is in the pay of the British government. He has received twelve hundred acres of wet land from the government. So, he is a willing stooge of the Britishers. In league with Bhatta, he does his best to defeat the freedom struggle in Kanthapura. It is he who excommunicates Moorthy for "the Pariah business," and thus is indirectly responsible for the death of his mother who is unable to bear the shock.

(8) Advocate Sankar

Sankar, the advocate, is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He believes in his principles of truth and non-violence and tries to follow in his footsteps. He is a true patriot and does his best for the cause of freedom. He wears *Khadi*, and does not go to functions where people come wearing dresses made of foreign cloth. When Gandhi is arrested and sent to jail, he keeps fast, for with Gandhi he believes that fasting is a means of self-purification. It gives spiritual strength and illumination. He loves truth, and does not undertake false cases. He withdraws himself as soon as he discovers that the case of his client Rama Chetty is false. He is thus different from other lawyers. Bold and fearless, he is not afraid of the government, and takes up the defence of Moorthy when he is arrested and tried in the city courts.

He is noble, generous and kind-hearted. As a husband, he is to be contrasted with Bhatta. When his first wife dies, he does not marry a second time. "Sankar was an ascetic of a man and had refused marriage after marriage, after he had lost his wife." On remembering his dead wife he remarks. "I have had a Lakshmi and I, a sinner, could not even keep her, and she has left me a child and that is enough". He remembers his wife, and regards it as a sin to marry again.

(9) Waterfall Venkamma

Raja Rao has a habit of giving tell-tale names to his characters, and none of these nick-names is more apt and suggestive then "Waterfall" given to Venkamma. Like a waterfall she is always shedding tears and roaring. She rails against practically everybody in the novel.

She is a woman of a petty, jealous nature. She cannot bear to see others prosperous or successful. The sight of the happiness of others arouses her wrath and she rails and rails against them. There is no end to her spite, jealousy and vindictiveness. She is jealous of Rangamma because she has a much larger house and constantly rails against her. "Why should a widow, and a childless widow too, have a big house like that ? And it is not her father who built it," says she. "It's my husband's ancestors that built it. I've two sons and five daughter's and the shaven widow hadn't even the luck of having a bandicoot to call her own." She would like to put lizard poison into her food and thus cause her death.

She is also against Moorthy, because he refused to marry her second daughter. She nurses this grudge against him, and does her best to have her revenge upon him. Orthodox, conservative, and narrow in her views, she has no sympathy with the Gandhi-movement. She, therefore, sides with Bhatta and the Swami. It is she who spreads the rumour that Moorthy is to be excommunicated. In this way, she causes his mother much pain which ultimately derives her to death She also hates Ratna for her progressive views and constantly hurls abuses at her. She rails and rails against everybody and thus justifies the nick-name the novelist has given to her.

Waterfall Venkamma symbolises all the pettiness, the jealousy, the triviality and the orthodoxy of Indian village life.

(10) Narsamma

She is the old widowed mother of Moorthy. She is orthodox and conservative, unable to understand the implications of the Gandhi-movement and the noble work in which her son is engaged. She gave birth to eleven children, five of whom died, and of the remaining six Moorthy was the only son. She is tall and thin, "and her big, broad ash marks gave her such an air of ascetic holiness". She has a great love for her son and she has high hopes of a brilliant career for him. But her hopes and dreams are shattered when he joins the freedom movement. She is literally shocked and her feelings are intensely hurt when Moorthy is ex-communicated by the Swami for the "Pariah business".

Being the youngest of her sons, Moorthy is deeply loved by her. Instead of becoming a sub-collector, as she hopes he would become, she is told that he has frequent intercourse with the Pariahs. This is a terrible blow to her. Excommunication is regarded by her as nothing less than a sin. "Oh ! to have a son ex-communicated. Oh ! to have gone to Benaras and Rameshwaram and to Gaya, and to have a a son ex-communicated. I wish I had closed my eyes with your father instead of living to see you polluted. Go away, you pariah." She weeps, sobs and bewails at the course of events and bursts forth into saying : "What, never to go to the temple or to an obsequial dinner ? Never to a marriage party, or a hair-cutting ceremony ?" She is shocked terribly and dies as a result of this shock.

She is good and noble, and we love and respect her, despite her orthodoxy and lack of sympathy for the freedom movement. There is no evil within her. She is not wicked and crooked, but only orthodox, credulous and a little dull-headed. She is the most pathetic character in the novel.

(11) Rangamma

She is one of the few educated women in the village. She reads the newspapers herself and thus keeps herself and others acquainted with the day to day developments elsewhere. She knows many things of general interest... "Of the plants that weep, of the monkeys that were the men we have become, of the worms, thin, as dust, worms that get into your blood and give you dysentry and plague and cholera. She told us, too, about the stars which are so far that some have poured their lights into the blue space long before you were born or your father was born..." She is a lady who is "deferent, soft-voiced, gentle-gestured".

Waterfall Venkamma is jealous of her, and roars and rails against her day and night. It is from her railings that we learn much about her. She is a childless widow, but she has a very big home, much larger than that of Venkamma herself. Her relatives are in the city, and visit her frequently. She is of great help to Moorthy in organising the Congress work in the village. She is a lady of enlightened views actively involved in the freedom struggle.

10

Critical Review of the Novel

1. Its Publication

Kanthapura, 1938, is Raja Rao's first novel. At that time he was just a youngman twenty-eight years of age. However, by this time he had acquired considerable experience as a writer. He had already written a number of essays and short stories. The short stories were later on collected and published as *Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories*, 1940. The collection includes such fine stories as *Javni* written as early as 1933. Thus he had acquired considerable experience as a writer, and had already mastered his craft when he came to the writing of *Kanthapura*. Moreover, as it was written in France thousands of miles away from India, the novel has that artistic detachment and objectivity which would not have been possible, had he written it in India in the very midst of the Gandhi movement.

The novel cannot be dismissed as immature, and it has many artistic merits. However, it remained unknown and obscure till Raja Rao won international fame and recognition with the publication of his next novel *The Serpant and the Rope*, 1960. *Kanthapura* was then discovered, read with interest, and gradually came to be recognised as a classic of the Indo-Anglian fiction, as one of the most authentic and most remarkable village novel ever written by an Indian in English. It is also remarkable for its realistic and impartial presentation of the impact of Gandhian movement. The novelist has succeeded in capturing the very spirit of those stirring days when Gandhi transformed the entire nation into an army of freedom fighters. As the novel is entirely free from his philosophical and metaphysical concerns of the novelist, which become too obtrusive in his later novels, it remains upto date his most popular novel. Considered purely as a work of art, it ranks very high.

2. The Significince of the Title

Or

'Kanthapura' as the hero of the novel.

Or

The Presentation of life in an Indian village in the Novel.

A South Indian Village

The title of a novel should be apt and suggestive. Just as a sign board tells us of the contents of a shop, so a good title should indicate the contents of the novel. It should at once tell us what the novel is about. The title *Kanthapura* is apt and suggestive for the novel is about a South Indian Village named Kanthapura, and if there is any hero in the novel it is the people, the community, of the village named Kanthapura.

Its Location

The novel opens with an account of the situation, the locale, of the village. We are told in the very beginning that Kanthapura is a village in Mysore in the Province of Kara. It is situated in the valley of Himavathy, there it lies "curled up like a child on its mother's lap". This single images makes the village spring into life, and the readers are able to visualise it as it lies sheltered and secluded like a child in its mother's lap. More detailed account of its topography then follows : "High on the Ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cold Arabian seas, up the Malabar coast is it, up Mangalore and Putture and many a centre of cardamom and coffee, rice and sugarcane. Roads, narrow, dusty, wind through the forests of teak and of jack, of sendal and of sal, and hanging over bellowing gorges and leaping over elephant-haunted valleys, they turn now to the left and now to the right, and bring you through the Alambe and Champa and Mena and Kola passes into the great granaries of trade. There, on the blue waters, they say, our cardamom and coffee get into the ships the Red-men bring, and, so they say, they go across the seven oceans into the countries where our rulers live."

Complex-structure : Cast Divisions

Having given an account of its topography, the novelist comes to the village itself. It has a complex structure. It has four and twenty houses in the Brahmin quarter ; it has a Pariah-quarter too, a Potters-quarter, a Weavers-quarter, and a Sudra-quarter. These socio-economic divisions in a village which has in all 60 or 100 houses, at once strike one with its novelty. And the novelty is not an invention of the novelist's, it is there in the village, has always been there, in this land of villages. In this way, by telling us of the various quarters into which the village is divided, the novelist has highlighted the fact that the Indian villages are caste-ridden, that there is no free mixing of the people even in the small and limited community of a village.

The People

Having described the village, the novelist comes to the people. There is Postmaster Suryanaryana with his two-storeyed house. Patwari Nanjundiah who had even put glass-panes to the windows ; the thotti-house of pock-marked Sidda which had a big veranda, large roof and a granery ; Waterfall Venkamma who roared day and night ; and Zamindar Bhatta who has gone on adding peasants lands to his own domain ; the young, idealisitc corner-house Moorthy who is destined to shake the village out of its complacency and put it on the map of Mysore and India ; and the nine-beamed house of Patel Range Gowda, the vigorous peasant chief of the village wedded so the soil from immemorial generations, a Tiger to the authorities. "These stand out among the men and women of Kanthapura. As for the rest, one could not say, the novelist tells us at the end of the introduction of his *dramatic personae*, whether they were rich or poor—they were badly dressed and always paid their taxes after several reminders. It is obvious he knows them just as well but if he does not individualize them it is obviously because he doesn't like to crowd his canvas. But even then he would not dismiss them without a thought, for he has felt for them in their wretchedness. It is by means of such concrete particulars that the inhabitants and their residences are known to us and these are helpful in visualizing the scene of action" (**Narasimhaiah**). Thus we are told of the people, their poverty, their ignorance, and their petty jealousies. Writes **Prof Atma Ram**, "The villagers are depicted in realistic colours. Their names are made descriptive in nature—it is a typical rural way. For instance : Bentlegged Chandrayya, Cardamom-field Ramachandra, Coffee-planter Ramayya, Corner-house Moorthy, Front-house Akkamma, Gold-bangle Somanna, Nine-beamed House Range Gowda, Nose-scratching Nanjamma, Temple Rangappa."

Their Religious Faith

The people are ignorant, poor and superstitious. But they are also deeply religious. They have full faith in goddess Kenchamma, the presiding diety of the village. Right in the centre of the village is a temple dedicated to Kenchamma, "Great Goddess, Benign one." There is a folk song which evokes in us images and attitudes to what Kenchamma means to the people of Kanthapura :

Kenchamma, Kenchamma,
Goddess benign and bounteous
Mother of Earth, blood of life
Harvest queen, rain crowned
Kenchamma, Kenchemma
Goddess benign and bounteous

Kenchamma is in the centre of the village, forms the still-centre of their lives and makes everything meaningful. Marriage, funeral, sickness, death, ploughing, harvesting, arrests, release—all are watched over by Kenchamma. "There may be small-pox or influenza around but you make a vow to the goddess, the next morning, you wake up and you find the fever has left you. Didn't she kill the demon who killed their children and molested their wives ? And so she will continue to protect them, come wind, come rain, come any distress."

Symbolic Significance

As the novel proceeds, the picture of village life is filled up by giving further accounts of the grinding poverty, illiteracy, and the conflicts and tensions that mark the Indian village life. Indeed, there is a constant shifting and ordering of material, selection of significant details so that Kanthapura acquires a symbolic significance. It becomes a microcosm of the macrocosm, one out of the lakhs and lakhs of Indian villages in which live 80% of the people of India.

Kanthapura : Its Response to Gandhi Movement

It is to this remote South Indian Village that there comes the Gandhi movement through Moorthy, Dore and other city boys. It is Moorthy who organises the Gandhi work in the village, he is indeed life and spirit behind the movement in Kanthapura, just as Gandhi was the life and spirit of the freedom struggle in India. But very soon the people of Kanthapura as a whole are actively involved and the novel becomes an account of their suffering and their heroic sacrifice. The people of Kanthapura have been enthused with the spirit of Gandhi, and they march ahead heroically despite all the suffering and the hardship they have to undergo. Says **Srinavasa Iyengar,** "In the end it truly becomes a mass movement, the villagers comprising men and women of all the castes and professions and the labourers of the Coffee Estate readily meeting the onslaught of the bureaucracy. An unequal fight it inevitably proves to be; for the Satyagrahis are maimed and broken and scattered, and a remanant reaches—after sore trials and vicissitudes—another village, Kashipura, beyond the border where they settle down. Some of the Satyagrahis—Rangamma, Ratna, Moorthy—spend an allotted span in jail, but the *Gandhi-Irwin Pact* and the political truce that comes in its wake hasten the release of the Satyagrahis. Young men like Moorthy doubt the wisdom of the truce, and would rather follow the lead of Jawaharlal Nehru, "the equal-distributionist" ; for the mass of the people, however, Gandhi can do no wrong, he can be guilty of no miscalculation, and they accept the truce contentedly and wait further developments patiently."

Conclusion : Aptness of the Title

Thus *Kanthapura* is not a novel dealing with the life and doings of any individual hero. It is certainly not the story of Moorthy, but of the masses of the village, of their suffering, of their exile, of their momentary defeat, a defeat which has in it seeds of ultimate

victory. It ends with an account of their life in Kashipura and gives us a sense of abiding fulfilment which they have attained. Hence if there is any hero in the novel, it is Kanthapura itself and its people. The title is apt and suggestive. The novelist was right in calling it *Kanthapura*.

3. Raja Rao's use of the mythical technique

Or

"Kanthapura" as a Gandhi-epic (Gandhiad) or Gandhi-Purana

Or

In Kanthapura "the political revolution is transcended and assimilated into the racial heritage as myth and legend."

Mythical Technique : Raja Rao's Use of It

In *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao has made effective use of the mythical technique used with such success by English writers like T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. The use of the mythical technique means that the past is juxtaposed with the present and in this way the past may serve as a criticism of the present, or it may be used to heighten and glorify the present. In his *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot has used the mythical technique to criticise the present, and in *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao has used this very technique to glorify the present, and to impart to the novel the dignity and status of an epic or *Purana*. It is in this way that the Gandhian movement, "is assimilated into the racial heritage as myth and legend". By the use of the mythical technique, the novelist has enriched the texture of his novel and imparted to it a rare expansiveness, elevation and dignity. According to **Meenakshi Mukherji**, "*Kanthapura* is again another and a larger attempt at creating a *sthala-purana*, i.e. a legendary tale of a specific locality." Just as in a myth some of the chief characters are gods and other beings larger in power than humanity, in this tale Moorthy is presented as a figure much above the common run of men. A dedicated, selfless soul, he is idealised to the extent of being regarded as a local Mahatma. And of course, there is the real Mahatma also, always in the background, though nowhere physically present. The village women think of him as the Big mountain, and of Moorthy as the small mountain.

Bringing Together of the Past and the Present

Past and present are freely mixed up and gods and goddess, and heroes and heroines of epics freely jostle with contemporary personalities. "The distinction between the time past and the time present is thus obliterated, and both are projected into the time future. Gandhi Mahatma is Rama, the red-foreigner or the brown inspector of police who flourishes a lathi is but a soldier in tenheaded Ravana's army of occupation and oppression. Nay more: the Satyagrahi in prison is the divine Krishna himself in Kanasa's prison. Events gather significance after the passage of some years, the humdrum becomes the unique, the trivial becomes the heroic, and the hectic excitement of a day becomes a permanent communal possession".

The Harikathas : Exaltation of Gandhi

The use of the mythical technique is seen at its best in the strange kind of *Harikathas* recited by Jayaramachar the Harikatha man. In his *Harikatha*, the past and the present are juxtaposed and contemporary events and personalities are constantly linked-up with Puranic Gods and epic-heroes and heroines. One of the *Harikathas* he recites is about the birth of Gandhi. It runs as follows: "In the great Heavens Brahma, the Self created One, was lying on his serpent, when the sage Valmiki entered, announced by the two doorkeepers. 'Oh, learned sire, what brings you into this distant world ?' asked Brahma, and, offering the sage a seat beside him, fell at his feet. 'Rise up, O God of Gods, I have come to bring you sinister news. Far down on the Earth you chose as your chief daughter Bharatha, the goddess of wisdom and well-being. You gave her the sage-loved Himalayas on the north and the seven surging seas to the south, and you gave her the Ganges to meditate on, the Godavary to live by, and the pure Cauvery to drink in. You gave her the riches of gold and of diamonds, and you gave her kings such as the world has never seen. And you gave her, too, sages radiating wisdom to the eight cardinal points of the earth, Krishna and Buddha, Sankara and Ramanuja. But, O Brahma you who sent us the prince propagators of the Holy Law and Sages that smote the darkness of Ignorance, you have forgotten us so long that men have come from across the seas and the oceans to trample on our wisdom and to spit on virtue itself. They have come to bind us and to whip us, to make our women die milkless and our men die ignorant. O Brahma, deign to send us one of your gods so that he may incarnate on Earth and bring back light and plenty to your enslaved daughter...' 'O Sage,' pronounced Brahma, 'is it greater for you to ask or for me to say "Yea" ? Siva himself will forthwith go and incranate on the Earth and free my beloved daughter from her enforced slavery. Pray seat yourself, and messengers of Heaven shall fiy to Kailas and Siva be informed of it.'

"And lo, when the Sage was still partaking of the pleasures Brahma offered him in hospitality, there was born in a family in Gujrat a son such as the world has never beheld. As soon as he came forth, the four wide walls began to shine like the Kingdom of the Sun, and hardly was he in the cradle than he began to lisp the language of wisdom. You remember how Krishna, when he was but a babe of four, had begun to fight against demons and had killed the serpent Kali. So too our Mohandas began to fight against the enemies of the country. And as he grew up, and after he was duly shaven for the hair ceremony, he began to go out into the villages and assemble people and talk to them, and his voice was so pure, his forehead so brilliant with wisdom, that men followed him, more and more men followed him as they did Krishna, the flute-player; and so he goes from village to village to slay the serpent of the foreign rule."

Thus the use of the mythical technique makes Gandhi the invisible god, and Moorthy the invisible Autar. The reign of the Red-men becomes Asuric rule, and it is resisted by the Devas, the Satyagrahis. Jayaramachar jumbles with splendid unconcern traditional mythology and contemporaneous politics : Siva is the three-eyed, and Swaraj too is three-eyed : Self-purification, Hindu-Muslim unity, Khaddar. Gandhi is Siva himself in human shape : he is engaged in slaying the serpent of foreign rule, as the boy Krishna killed the serpent Kaliya. *Bhajans* and *Harikathas* mix religion and politics freely and often purposefully, the reading of *the Gita*, and hand-spinning are elevated into a daily ritual, like puja.

This juxtaposition of the past and the present, of men and gods, is kept up throughout the novel upto the very end. Gandhi's trip to England to attend the Second Round Table Conference is invested with *Puranic* significance : "They say the Mahatma will go to the Red-man's country, and he will get us Swaraj...And we shall all be happy. And Rama will come back from exile, and Sita will be with him, for Ravana will be slain and Sita freed, and he will come back with Sita on his right in a chariot of the air, and brother Bharata will go to meet them with the worshipped sandals of the Master on his head. And as they enter Ayodhya there will be a rain of flowers. Like Bharata we worship the sandals of the Brother saint..."

Conclusion

It is the use of the mythical technique that makes *Kanthapura* a unique novel, almost a new spcies of fiction. In this way it becomes *Gandhian* or *Gandhi-epic*. It has a recognisable epic quality and one may be excused for calling it, Raja Rao's *Ramayana*. As **Srinivas Iyengar** puts it, "*Kanthapura' is a veritable Grammar of the Gandhian Myth—the myth that is but a poetic translation of the reality. It will always have a central place in Gandhi literature.*"

4. The element of Poerty, Fantasy and lyricism

Or

Fusion of poetry, science and politics in the novel

Imaginative Heightening of Reality

Kanthapura is a novel unique in many ways. One of its distinctive features is the imaginative colouring which is imparted to the ordinary and the commonplace, and the known and the familiar is thus made to look unfamiliar and uncommon. The narrator is an old woman with a highly poetic imagination, and consequently there is a constant mingling of poetry and politics, constant heightening and transmuting of reality. Everything is seen as coloured by her poetic imagination. The reality is not destorted and falsified, but it is shot through and irradiated by poetry and fantasy.

Personification of Natural Phenomena

Again and again poetry floods the pages of the novel, as do monsoon showers a parched plain. A commonplace, yearly event like the coming of rains in *Vaisakh* is described in highly poetic terms, so that it seems to be something uncommon and unfamiliar. The rain is humanised and its arrival is described in human terms : "In *Vaisakh* men plough the fields of Kanthapura. The rains have come, the fine, swift-footing rains that skip over the bronze mountains, tiptoe the crags, and leaping into the valleys, go splashing and windswung, a winnowed pour, and the coconuts and the betel-nuts and the cardamom plants choke with it and hiss back, and there, there it comes over the Bebbur Hill and the Kanthur Hill and begins to paw upon the tiles, and the cattle come running home... and people leave their fields and rush to the courtyard, and turning towards the Kenchamma Temple, send forth a prayer, saying, 'There, there, the rains have come, Kenchamma ; may our houses be white as silver' and the lightning flashes and the thunder stirs the tiles and children rush to the gutter slabs to sail paper boats down to Kashi."

Poetic Descriptions—Poetic Prose

Equally poetic is the description of Diwali, the festival of lights. The mythopoeic imagination of the narrator is at work, and gods freely jostle with men in her account of the festival. Her essentially romantic imagination heightens, transfigures and irradiates with the divine light of poetry what would be a prosaic, matter of fact account of a common, yearly occurrence in the hands of a less gifted artist : "Kartik has come to Kanthapura...with the glow of lights, and the unpressed footsteps of the wandering gods ; while lights from claytrays and red lights from copper-stands, and diamond lights that glow from the bowers of entrance-leaves ; lights that glow from banana-trunks and mango twigs, yellow lights behind white leaves, and green lights behind yellow leaves, and white lights behind green leaves ; and night comes through the shadowed streets, and hissing over bellied boulders and hurrying through the dallying drains, night curls through the Brahmin Street and the Pariah Street and the Potters Street and the Weavers Street and flapping through the mango grove, hangs clawed for one moment to the giant pipal, and then shooting across the broken fields, dies quietly into the river—and gods walk by lighted streets...Kartik is a month of the gods." *It is all a brilliantly sustained piece of rhythmic prose.*

Science, Poetry and Fantasy

Rangamma, one of the more cultured and educated women of the village, discourses on science in an easy, popular way, and the narrators account of her discourse is a curious mixture of science, poetry and fantasy. She lets her imagination go, uses the known and the familiar to illuminate and explain scientific truths, till science is poetised and the entire account becomes a curious piece of poetry and fantasy :

> "She knows so many, many things too, of the plants that weep, of the monkeys that were the men we have become, of the worms, thin-as-dust, worms that get into your blood and give you dysentery and plague and cholera. She told us, too, about the stars that are so far that some have poured their light into the blue space long before you were born, or your father was born or your grandfather was born ; and just as a day of Brahma is a million years of ours, the day of the stars is a million million times of our day, and each star has a sun and each sun has a moon, and each moon has an earth and some there are that have two moons...and you put your eyes to a great tube and see another world with sun and moon and stars, all bright and floating in the diamond dust of god. And that gave us such a shiver, I tell you..."

The discription is vivid and graphic, a poetic and whimsical rendering of reality. The radio becomes the speech that goes across the air ; Jagdish Chandra Bose's discovery gets expressed as the plants that weep ; and Darwin's theory of Evolution as the monkeys that were the men we have become ; of the 17th century French scientist's germ theory as worms thin-as-dust that get into your blood and give you dysentery and plague and cholera. Sir James Jeans' Mysterious Universe comes to Rangamma with an equally diarming irreducible minimum of simplicity, though not without a touch of irony, "as the stars that are so far, that some have poured their light into the blue space long before you were born, or your father was born or your grandfather was born." "A purely scientific sensibility is absorbed into a unified sensibility and the dichotomy of *Sir C.P. Snow's* two cultures disappears with only different degrees of one cultural consciousness resulting from such an absorption of science and religion. History and myth meet with effortless ease and merge in one another" **(Narasimhaiah).**

Poetic Heightening of Politics

Just as science, so also politics, is charged with poetry and is transmuted and glorified. Says **Srinivas Iyengar,** "In a passage like the following, describing the people of Kanthapura waiting at the roadside for Moorthy on his release from prison, nervous agitation wings itself into appropriate language : And hearts began to beat, and yet we saw no Moorthy and yet no Moorthy, and yet no Moorthy, and yet not a hair of his head was seen, and we were silent as though in the sanctum at the camphor ceremony. Yet no Moorthy, and no Moorthy, and the bus had surely passed by the river..." There is also the vivid description of the soldiers and coolies being asked to walk over the prostrate Satyagrahis, and many of them joining the Satyagrahis instead : "...and the Police, frightened, caned and caned at the coolies till they pushed themselves over us ; and they put their feet here and they put their hands there, but Rangamma shouted *Vande Mataram*, lie low, brothers and sisters," and we all lay down so that not a palm-width of space lay bare, and the coolies would not move, and we held their hands, and we held to their feet, and we held to their sarees and dhoties and all, while the rain poured on and on. And the police got nervous and they began to kick us in our backs and stomachs, and the crowd shouted, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and someone took a kerosene tin and began to beat it, and someone took a cattle-bell and began to ring it, and they cried, "With them, brothers, with them," and they leaped and they ducked and they came down to lie beside us, and we shouted, "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai, Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*".

Lyric Intensity and Poignancy

It is this constant fusion of desparate elements—poetry, fantasy, science, politics, etc.—that gives *Kanthapura* its distinctive place in the work of the Indian writers of fiction in English. *Raja Rao has poetised the Indo-Anglian novel, and imparted to it the intensity and poignancy of a lyric.* From this point of view *Kanthapura* is a remarkable achievement. It will always be read and enjoyed as a classic of Indo-Anglian fiction.

5. The Theme of the Novel—Gandhi and our Village

Or

The Gandhi Movement and Its Impact

Or

The presentation of Gandhian freedom struggle in the Novel

Or

" 'Kanthapura' is not a mere political or thesis novel, but a great work of art"

Kanthapura : The Three Strands

Kanthapura is a great village novel, but it is greater still as a novel depicting the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on the life of a remote and obscure Indian village, and what happens in Kanthapura under the impact of the Gandhian non-violent non-cooperation movement, was happening all over India, in the lakhs and lakhs of Indian villages, during those stirring days from 1919-1930 when Gandhi transformed the entire nation in a single life-time into an army of disciplined and non-violent freedom fighters. There were at least three strands in the Gandhian movement—the political, the religious, and the social (including economic)—and the three have been woven inextricably into the complex story of the regeneration of Kanthapura as a result of the freedom struggle. It is not merely a political novel, but a novel concerned as much with the social, religious and economic transformation of the people, as with the struggle for political freedom.

Nehru's View : Impact of Gandhi

Kanthapura is an obscure, out of the way, slumbering South Indian Village. This obscure village, slumbering for centuries, suddenly comes to life thanks to the non-violent, non-co-operation movement of Gandhi in the twenties. It is in the handling of this theme that the novelist quickens it to activity and thus gives us an insight into the appalling social conditions of our villages as also into the values that have preserved our people against flood, fire, famine and exploitation from within and from without—and more than all, that incomparable manner in which Gandhi tapped the deeply religious and spiritual resources of our people living in the remotest parts of India and built up a national movement in one life-time. "Remember Nehru's description of the impact of Gandhi on the Indian scene in *The Discovery of India* ; 'He was like a powerful current of fresh air, a beam of light that pierces the darkness, like a whirlwind that upsets many things, but most of all the working of men's minds.' The entire action comes out as an artist's enactment of Nehru's image of the impact of Gandhi on the Indian scene, together with a hundred particulars that illumine many hidden spots in the life of the country during that period."

Total Transformation of Indian Life : Sacrifice of the Masses

But it is no political novel any more than was Gandhi's movement a mere political movement. No other book of this scope and size on this theme pictures so vividly, truthfully and touchingly the story of the resurgence of India under Gandhi's leadership : its religious character, its economic and social concerns, its political ideals, precisely in the way Gandhi tried to spiritualize politics, the capacity for sacrifice of our people in response to the call of one like Gandhi—not the spectacular sacrifice of the few chosen ones who later became India's rulers—but the officially unchronicled, little, nameless, unremembered acts of courage and sacrifice of peasants and farm hands, students and lawyers, women and old men, thanks to whom Gandhi's unique experiment gathered momentum and grew into a national movement. "While the author is quite involved in it, his stay abroad six thousand miles away at the time he was writing it gave him the necessary perspective and detachment and helped him see also all that violence and waste and futility and that terrible beauty that was born of it, all as manifest in our abiding faith in non-violence, religion and what one vaguely calls idealism. For, Kanthapura is India in microcosm : what happened there is what happened everywhere in India during those terrible years of our fight for freedom."

Impact on Moorthy : His Conversion

"The impact of Gandhi on our villages was an impact of a dynamic religion, through one of its supreme practitioners, on its later manifestations in our degrading caste-system ; of idealism and a sense of purpose and urgency on a people who had virtually ceased to live, with resignation writ large on their faces. It was Gandhi's greatness that he produced hundreds and thousands of little Gandhis throughout the country. To be young was very heaven in those days. And Corner-House Moorthy, our Moorthy, as the villagers called him, was young. Moorthy was in college when he felt the impact of Gandhi, and he walked out of it, a Gandhi man. There is nothing extraordinary in it though, for in those days hundreds and thousands of young men throughout the country gave up their studies and courted arrest. But about the manner in which Moorthy walked out of college : he is said to have had, not an actual, first hand experience of Gandhi by personal contact, but a vision of Gandhi addressing a public meeting and Moorthy pushing his way through the crowd and joining the band of volunteers and receiving inspiration by a touch of Gandhi's hand. And that very evening Moorthy went out alone, and came back to college and walked out of it, for good.

Moorthy : the Centre of Action

"Back in Kanthapura, Moorthy organises the Gandhi-work in the village. The entire novel bristles with action, and all that action is centred round Moorthy. He forms the Congress Committee in the village, maintains constant touch with the city Congrees Committee, and through newspapers and other publicity material keeps the people constantly in touch with events in other parts of the country. It is he who calls the *Harikatha* man, mixes religion with politics and likens Gandhi to Ram and Redman to Ravan, and calls *Sawaraj*, the three-eyed. He gives a practical form to the Gandhian programme of *Swadeshi* and eradication of untouchability by going from door to door, even in the Pariah quarters, and explaining to the people the economics of the *charkha* and *Swadeshi*. He enthuses the women of the villages to take to charkha-spinning and later on organises the women voluntary corps. There is considerable opposition from the ingnorant, the conservative, and vested interests, but the opposition is faced with courage and determination and the help of influential people like Range Gowda is enlisted. There is general awakening and the atmosphere grows highly charged with emotion and enthusiasm as news of the Dandi March, of the enthusiastic public support of the miracle that Gandhi was performing, reach Kanthapura.

Upheaval, Tumult and Suffering

Those were tumultous, stirring times, and this atmosphere of tumult, of a national upheaval, under the impact of a single personality, has been successfully captured by the novelist. There are dharnas, picketings and satyagrahs. People, even children and old men, are injured and wounded in large numbers. Women, like Ratna, are beaten up and dishonoured, but their spirit is not crushed. Shouts of *Gandhi ki Jai* and *Inqlab Zindabad* resound in the air and boost the morale of the people. Large numbers are arrested and sent to jail. When Moorthy is arrested his place is taken by Ratna, and so the movement continues. There is the no-tax campaign, and when the people refuse to pay the land revenue, their lands are laid waste and they are compelled to flea the village. In the end it truly becomes a mass movement, the villagers comprising men and women of all the castes and professions and the labourers of the Coffee Eastate readily meeting the onslaught of the bureucracy. An unequal fight it inevitably proves to be, for the Satyagrahis are maimed and broken and scattered, and a remanant reaches—after sore trials and vicissitudes—another village, Kashipura, beyond the border, where they settle down. Some of the Satyagrahis—Rangamma, Ratna, Moorthy—spend an allotted span in jail, but the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the political truce that comes in its wake hasten the release of the Satyagrahis. Young men like Moorthy doubt the wisdom of the truce, and would rather follow the lead of Jawaharlal Nehru, "the equal-distributionist" ; for the mass of the people, however, Gandhi can do no wrong, he can be guilty of no miscalculation and they accept the truce contentedly and await further developments patiently.

No Personal Appearance of Gandhi

Kanthpura has rightly been called a Gandhi-epic for it conveys the very spirit of those stirring days when a single individual in a single life-time could so enthuse the people and so transform the entire nation. The readers feel the Charisma of his personality, but the great Mahatma himself does never appear on the scene. He remains in the background but his presence is always felt through the transformation he is causing in Kanthapura, and in every other village of India, for Kanthapura is but a microcosm of the macrocosm. Mulk Raj Anand introduces the great Mahatma in his novel the *Untouchable* and the effect is melodramatic and sensational. Raja Rao has skilfully avoided this mistake. He has made the presence of Gandhi felt, without actually introducing him on the stage.

Impartial and Objective Presentation

It should also be noted that Raja Rao's presentation of the Gandhian movement is impartial and objective. He could achieve the necessary artistic detachment, for the novel was written in France thousands of miles away from the actual scene of occurrence. There is no idealisation ; both the dark and the bright sides of the picture have been presented. The depiction of the Gandhi movement goes along with the depiction of the petty jealousies, and trivialities of village life. If there are Ratna, Rangamma, and Patel Range Gowda there are also Bhatta, Waterfall Venkamma and Bade Khan. Even the character of Moorthy has not been idealised, even he displays the necessary human weakness and hesitation in entering a Pariah's hut and tasting the drink offered by him. *Throughout the novel idealization is accompanied by constant disapprovals of this Gandhi-business and Gandhi vagabondage, the cynicism of friends, and hostilities—veiled and open—from neighbours—all making for constant vigilance against the dangers of the thesis novel.*

A Great Work of Art

In short, *Kanthapura* is a great work of art presenting realistically, impartially and artistically the impact of the Gandhi movement on the masses of India. *It is not a propaganda piece or thesis novel, but a work of art characterised by the necessary artistic detachment and impartiality.* It is a great classic of the India freedom struggle ; it gives us more essential truth about the Gandhian era than any official records or books of history. It is a valuable social document of abiding interest and significance. It is not a mere political novel, but one concerned with the total regeneration and resurgence of the masses of India.

6. Raja Rao's rendering of Indian sensibility

Or

The Indianness of "Kanthapura"

Or

"Kanthapura" is Indian both in theme and treatment

Raja Rao's Adaptation and Modification of a Western Art Form

The novel is a western art-form but Raja Rao has used it to express an essentially Indian sensibility. *Kanthapura* is Indian both in theme and treatment. It is not to be judged with reference to the western novel, say the novels of Henry James. It is an Indian novel, and it expresses the Indian sensibility to perfection. **Prawer Jhabvala** has rightly said that, "the as yet unwritten ideal Indian novel... would be bits of prose-poetry, anecdotes, lots of philosophizing and musing, and oblique kinds of wit, and an ultimate self-surrender, a sinking back into formlessness, into eternity...Raja Rao's novel comes nearest to this ideal." Laws of the western novel cannot be applied to it. **David McCutchion**, in his critique of the novel asks : "*Is this a novel at all ?......All the central concerns of the western novel are absent—social relations, psychological motivation, characterization, Judgment, a passion for the concrete......*" The answer is in Raja Rao's *Foreword to Kanthapura*. He says the Indo-English novel must use the traditional Indian form of story-telling where "...We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous ats and ons to bother us—we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought." The same is true of characterization. Characters in Indo-English novels are seldom defined and would be called caricatures by the standard criteria of prose criticism. But, as **Prawer Jhabvala** says in the context mentioned earlier, there is not much interest in individual characteri-ization because, "here we are all part of one another and beyond and, above that, part of God." Raja Rao has suitably modified a borrowed art-form to express Indian sensibility, he has in this way achieved a rare synthesis of the East and West.

The Indian Theme : Sense of Oneness with Nature

Kanthapura is Indian both in theme and treatment. Its theme is to put it simply, "Gandhi and our village". Kanthapura is a typical Indian village, and it has been described minutely with great realism. We are told of its location, of its crops, of its grinding poverty, illiteracy and superstition. The coming of the Gandhi movement to it enables the novelist to penetrate to the rivalries, jealousies and the rigidities of the caste system that lie below the surface. The villagers are represented in realistic colours. Their names are made descriptive in a typically rural way. They live in close intimacy with nature, and are a part of it. For them nature is a living being, and even hills, rivers, fields and animals have a distinct presence, a personality of their own. They have not lost their sense of wonder, of the enchantment of nature and an intuitive wisdom to perceive natural phenomena in terms of man's place in the scheme of things : *Suddenly a shooting star sweeping across the sky between the house-roof and the byre-roof, and Ramakrishanyya says, 'Some good soul has left the earth'. Here is a distinctive Indian sensibility, a peasant sensibility, to be precise, expressed in the English language.*

Use of Religion for Political Ends

Indian sensibility is essentially religious and even politics gets spiritualised. India's most important political leaders and social reformers have all been great religious figures, and social and political ends have been attained through the guise of religion. This was also so in the case of Gandhi and his non-cooperation, non-violent movement. Says **Narasimhaiah**, "There are at least three strands of experience in the novel : the political, the religious, the social." To the peasants, Kenchamma is a Goddess, benign and bounteous. They are deeply religious in outlook. Moorthy, initiated into Gandhian faith, becomes a veritable force in the village. Slowly and steadily Moorthy becomes a Gandhi man with a mysterious power to move the people : "What is in him, we ask, that binds our hearts so ? After all we saw him as a child, sister. And yet......"

As the story progresses the three threads of experience tend to be one : the religious, social and political issues become one and the same. The blend is achieved when the villagers consider Moorthy to be the Small Mountain. It is to be remembered that the Big Mountain is Siva, their Protecter. Here the Gandhian ideal and the religious spirit merge together. The religious elements and the social and political issues are artistically transformed into one entity. It is natural that prayers and national songs are sung side by side. The objective is to attain independence, but the means adopted are religious : *harikatha*, *bhajans*, *fasts*, *prayers and non-violent resistance*.

Theme of Shakti-worship

In the struggle, women's role is important. The author presents them as various forms of *Shakti*. Whereas Indian woman is coy, delicate and submissive, she is also firm as rock, great in suffering. *Shakti* rises in them, and each of them is enthused at the proper time. Psychologically prepared for the titanic encounter, they get much inspiration from others examples. It is to be noted that in the last phase of peaceful resistance it is Ratna, a woman, who takes over from Moorthy and leads the Satyagrahis.

Shakti-worship is an essentially Indian theme and it runs through *Kanthapura*. Says **Uma Parameswarn,** "Voluble, with an infinite capacity for love and for passing malice, quick to spark into enthusiasm and into cynicism, the women of Kanthapura are more human than those created by Raja Rao else where. They become women at certain times but there is no incongruity between their actions and the author's claim. One realizes that the immanent *Shakti* rises in every woman at certain pivotal points of life.

"Different forms of *Shakti* are menifested through the women of Kanthapura. *Shakti's* indomitable spirit possesses them in their Satyagraha (non-violent struggle) against the British government. When the police ill-treat them with their sticks and boots, the women think, move, and act as one, for they are more distinct and prevasive in the devotional aspect. Woman as the Eternal Devotee, *Shakti* kneeling in rapt adoration in front of Siva, reveals herself through them as they listen to Jayaramachar retelling epic stories and to Ramakrishnayya reading passages from the Scriptures. The most touching example of their edifying faith is the narrator's musing on the ruins of Kanthapura. She dreams of a happy ending to a modern *Ramayana* where Rama (Gandhi) will return from his exile (visit to England) with Sita (India) who had been captured by Ravana (the British) and as he returns to Ayodhya (Delhi) Bharata (Nehru) who has been reigning as regent, will welcome him and there will be celestial flowers showered upon his aerial chariot."

Indian Way of Story-telling

The theme is Indian and the treatment of the theme is also typically Indian. The method of narration is typically Indian. The

Indian Grandmother is the most ancient and most typical of story-tellers, and the narrator in the novel, Achakka, is just such a grandmother, narrating the story for the benefit of a new comer, years later. "Achakka is more articulate than her predecessors, indeed, her garrulity is ear-splitting, if taken in large doses ; her narrative style is the novel's crowning charm and also the greatest threat to its success. Those familiar with the vernacular and with the circumlocution of Indian speech habits will be delighted with Achakka's narrative style and its gossipy digressions."

Raja Rao has used the ancient Indian way of narration. It is a breathless story illustrating the age old Indian tradition of story-telling. As the novelist says "We, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly and when we move we move quickly. Achakka's inordinately long, meandering sentences, use of blanks, digressions and expressions like 'this and that', 'here and there', are meaningful." In the very opening sentences, as **Mulk Raj Anand** points out, "the reader can almost hear grandma talking. Episode follows episode, and each one is integral to the story." The detailed accounts of Sankar, Rangamma and Bhatta are revealing, essential for the narrative. It is a long interminable tale, and its essentially Indianness is seen in its long interminable sentences, long paragraphs, and the absence of division into chapters.

Use of Indian Imagery, Proverbs and Idioms

In order to convey an essentially Indian sensibility,—we may say peasant sensibility—Raja Rao has evolved a suitable style. It is not "Babu English" that he has used. *The words are English but the organisation is Indian and the novelist had to organise it himself.* The language is saturated with Indian idiom, Indian imagery and rural colour. Sometimes there are literal translations from Kannada, and sometimes there is breaking up of the English syntax to convey emotional upheavals and agitations. Many words are imported from Indian languages, and used as they are without any translation. For example we get *Ahimsa*, *Dhoti*, *Harikatha*, *Maistri*, *Mandap*, to name a few. He frequently uses village proverbs, legends and concrete imagery in Indian context. For instance, in his similes familiar animals and birds figure most :

(*1*) *Our hearts beat like the wings of bats* ; (*2*) *every squirrel has his day* ; (*3*) *the youngest is always the holy bull* ; (*4*) *and yet he was as honest as an elephant* ; (*5*) *a rasping hiss as though a thousand porcupines have suddenly bristled up* ; (*6*) *does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant ?*

Numerous proverbs find a natural place in the peasant speech :

(*a*) *The policemen are not your uncle's sons* ; (*b*) *saw you like a rat on your mother's lap* ; (*c*) *the first daughter milks the cow when the mother is ill* ; (*d*) *you cannot straighten a dog's tail* ; (*e*) *there* *is neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura*; (*f*) *only a pariah looks at the teeth of dead cows*; (*g*) *land, lust and wifely loyality go badly together.*

Use of Peasant Speech

Sometimes the peasant's use an abusive, vulgar language, and Raja Rao also does not hesitate to use such a language when the occasion demands it, though his use of it is more restrained and judicious than that of Mulk Raj Anand. Such language is an integral part of peasant speech, and so its use is essential to express peasant sensibility. At one time the peasants burst out when the wind or rain lets them down : "*May your hause be destroyed—may your wife die childless—I'll sleep with your mother.*" Outbursts like these are fully justified. This is indeed *the natural speech of the rural folk transmuted into English.* With the effective use of the "dialect" and village material the novelist has succeed in conveying, "*in a language not one's own the spirit that is one's own.*"

Conclusion

To conclude : *Kanthapura* is Indian both in theme and treatment. Raja Rao has shown to other Indians writing in English how best to express in a foreign art-form a sensibility which is essentially Indian.

7. Art of Characterisation

Or

"Kanthapura" as a portrait-gallery

No Sharp Individualisation : Causes

Raja Rao possessed in the highest degree the one essential gift of a novelist, the power to create living, concrete characters. However, the characters in the novel are not sharply and distinctly individualised. For one thing, Raja Rao did not want to over-crowd his convass. Secondly, his purpose was to depict a mass movement and its impact, and highly individualised characters would have deflected attention from such a depiction. Thirdly, he believed in the oneness of all, of God, man and man, and man and nature, and hence did not consider individual characterisation necessary. But all this does not mean that he lacked the art of successful characterisation ; with a single stroke of the pen he can bring a character to life, and make him vivid and real. The canvass of the novel is a crowded one, a host of characters move across his pages. But such is the art of the novelist that even his minor characters have been endowed with life and vitality, and linger long in the memory. Their vitality arises from the novelist's close, first hand knowledge of the life and character of the rural folk he has portrayed, and this makes *Kanthapura* a veritable picture-gallery, crowded with living, breathing, human beings.

Multiplicity of Characters : "God's Plenty"

In the foreground there are a number of major figures, with a host of minor figures in the background, taking part in the action and throwing the major figures into sharper relief. Moorthy, Ratna, Patel Range Gowda, Bhatta, Policeman Bade Khan, hold the front of the stage, and behind them we have such lesser figures as Rangamma, Narsamma, Venkamma, Dore, Ramayya, Nanjundia, Sommana, and many others with their petty rivalries, jealousies and mundane concerns. These characters are drawn from all sections of village society—the Brahmins, the Sudras, the Potters, the Weavers and the Pariahs. There are also Advocate Sankar, the Harikatha man, Jayaramachar, and the white Sahib of Skeffington Coffee-Estate. The great Mahatma does not appear on the scene, but his influence in all-prevasive and dominant. Similarly, the Swami does never visit the village but his pernicious influence in ever felt. He excommunicates Moorthy and thus indirectly causes the death of Narsamma, his mother. In the words of **Dryden**, "*Here is God's plenty*", indeed.

Anti-thetical Groupings

These characters are sharply divided into two group, "The Rulers (and their supporters), on the one hand, and the Satyagrahis (and their sympathisers), on the other. There are various other divisions too : orthodoxy is pitted against reform, exploitation against sufferance, the planter against the coolies, the corrupt official against the self-respecting villager. There is adroit polarization in the plotless grandmother's tale. Advocate Sankar has his opposite in adovcate Seenappa, and Ranganmma and Ratna are opposed by Venkamma.

Ways of Enlivening a Character

The characters, both major and minor, are imparted life and vitality with a single stroke of the brush, so to say. One of the most frequent device used by the novelist to vivify his characters is the addition of tell-tale nicknames or epithets : *Waterfall* Venkamma, *Nose-scratching* Nanjamma, *Front-house* Akkamma ; *Temple* Rangappa, *Coffee-Planter* Ramayya, *Patwari* Nanjundia, *Gold-Bangle* Sommanna, *Cordamom-field* Ramachandra ; and there is, of course, *Corner-house* Moorthy who goes through life as, "a noble cow, quiet generous, serene, deferent and brahmanic, a very prince." These epithets describe sometimes the appearance e.g. *pock-marked* Sidda ; sometimes the profession e.g. *rice-pounding* Rajamma ; sometimes the habit, e.g. *nose-scratching* Nanjamma, and sometimes the location of the house, e.g. *front-house* Akamma and *corner-house* Moorthy. Sometimes a whole character comes to life in one phrase, "Ironshop Imam Khan, gun in hand and fire in his eyes" and a whole social milieu gets summed up in "kitchen queen" for the Indian woman. Even the huge locomotive is seen as a living, kicking giant : "the train sneezed and wheezed and snorted and moved on". At other times telling imagery is used to vivify a character. Thus Moorthy is likened to a cow and to an elephant.

Character Contrast

Character-traits are highlighted and thrown into sharp relief by contrast. The minor characters, for example, serve to highlight the major ones. The character of Sankar is impressive only because he is not like other advocates who had no sense of discrimination and lacked in any sense of partriotism. His love for *Khaddar*, Hindi and truth is exaggerated to the extent of looking ridiculous, but it is this that distinguished him from the other greedy, snobbish and shallow advocates. This is stressed by contrasts with the meanness and greediness of Advocate Seenappa. Similarly, Waterfall Venkamma condemns the whole world specially the progressive elements of the village. It is against her meanness frivolousness and conservatism that the character of Ratna shines out.

Women Characters

In the end, a word may be said about the women-characters in the novel. Raja Rao sees woman as *Shakti*, as Mother-Earth and the theme of *Shakti*-worship runs through his novels. Writes **Uma Parmeswaran** in this connection, "Voluble, with an infinite capacity for love and for passing malice, quick to spark into enthusiasm and into cynicism, the women of *Kanthapura* are more human than those created by Raja Rao elsewhere. They become *Women* at certain times but there is no incongruity between their action and the author's claim. One realizes that the immanent *Shakti* rises in every woman at certain pivotal points of life."

Different forms of *Shakti* are manifested through the women of *Kanthapura*. *Shakti's* indomitable spirit possesses them in their Satyagraha (non-violent struggle) against the British government. When the police ill-treat them with their sticks and boots, the women think, move, and act as one, for they are one. Inspired by Gandhi and the very incarnation of *Shakti* the women sing :

There is one Government, sister,
There is one Government, sister,
And that is the Government of the Mahatma.

More distinct and pervasive is the devotional aspect. Woman as the Eternal Devotee, *Shakti* kneeling in rapt adoration in front of *Siva*, reveals herself through them as they listen to Jayaramachar retelling epic stories and to Ramakrishnayya reading passages from the Scriptures. The most touching example of their edifying faith is the narrator's musing on the ruins of Kanthapura. She dreams of happy ending to a modern *Ramayana*, "where Rama (Gandhi) will return from his exile (visit to England) with Sita (India) who had been captured by Ravana (the British) and as he returns to Ayodhya (Delhi)

Bharata (Nehru) who has been reigning as regent, will welcome him and there will be celestial flowers showered upon his aerial chariot."

Conclusion

In short, the canvas of *Kanthapura* is a crowded one, for the aim of the novelist was to depict a mass movement and a social *milieu*. Still his characters are not mere symbols or types. They are living, breathing realities, with an individuality of their own. They are simple and static, they do not change and grow, but such is the art of the novelist that even his minor figures are imparted life and individuality through a few masterly strokes of the pen, and so they linger long in the memory.

8. Art and technique of narration

Indian Tradition of Story-telling

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is a triumph of narrative art. It has been admired by all his readers. It is perfectly suited to the ends he wanted to achieve. He tells us in his classic *Preface* to the novel that the *telling has not been easy*. This was so because he had to capture in a foreign language the tempo of Indian life. As he himself tells us, "*we in India think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move, we move quickly, and our paths are paths interminable*. It is this swiftness of movement which an Indian novelist must capture, he must tell a tale in which episodes follow episodes in an endless succession. *Kanthapura* is just such a tale; Raja Rao has been eminently successful despite the difficulties of the task. He succeeded in bringing into his compass an amazing amount of heterogenous material, and still move ahead swiftly towards the end he had in mind. The narration is straightforward and chronological, there is no backward and forward movement as in a stream of conscious novel. Besides this, the English syntax has been suitably modified, broken, we should say, to suit the emotions which are typically Indian.

The Narrator

The tale has not been narrated by the novelist himself, but by a *persona*, (imagined character) called Achakka. It is the same device as has been followed by Joseph Conrad in *Lord Jim* and other novels. Indian novelist like Kamala Markandaya have also used this technique but none with such success as Raja Rao. Achakka is an old grantmother, that most ancient of story-tellers. She had been personally involved in the events which form the substance of the novel and she narrates them years later for the benefit of a new comer. Thus the substance of the novel is made up of the stream of her memory, in which many events and characters have been blurred by the passage of time, and many others have been heightened by her imagination. She is a woman with a balanced mind, sound commonsense, and the gift of shrewd and intelligent observation. Her personality colours the whole non-cooperation movement, the brave resistance of the people and their consequent suffering. All is recollected and narrated by a *naivete* which is not the author's but the narrator's.

Advantages of the Choice

According to **Meenakshi Mukherji,** "the choice of such a narrator serves several useful purposes. Making this old woman the narrator enables Raja Rao to mingle fact and myth in an effective manner. For the old woman, Jawaharlal is a Bharata to the Mahatma —the Mahatma who, she believes, will slay Ravana so that Sita may be freed. For her Gandhi has attained the status of God, and Moorthy is regarded as his *avtor* in Kanthapura. The characteristically concrete imagination of the uneducated mind pictures the Mahatma as large and blue like the Sahyadri mountains on whose slopes the pilgrims climb to the top, while Moorthy is seen as the small mountain. To her the Satyagraha becomes a religious ceremony to which she devotes her sacred ardour.

"The second advantage derived by this choice of narrator is that the language used by her is of an elemental quality. Her reaction to things is direct and vivid, not literary and second-hand. She talks of "the pumpkin moon" ; "the stream of milk splashed on a moonlit night" : "Young boys bright as banana trunks" ; all are images taken from familiar phenomena which would come naturally to a village woman. The character also enables Raja Rao to achieve his professed aim of reproducing the rhythm of Indian speech in English, as well as of coming closest to the oral tradition of story-telling. In the now well-known *Preface* to *Kanthapura* Raja Rao has stated that the meandering, repetitive manner of story-telling is not only an oral tradition but is also part of the literary tradition in India. He refers to the 214,778 verses of the *Mahabharta* and 48,000 verses of the *Ramayana* to substantiate his view. In *Kanthapura* the constant shuttling back and forth in time is easily justified as an old woman's leisurely manner of story-telling.

The narrator thus provides a convenient point of view, though she is never sharply individualised. We know nothing about her beyond the fact that she is a widow who has now no one except Seemu (who may be her son or grandson) and has seven acres of wet land and twelve acres of dry land. This numerical precision is again meant to convey the simplicity of the way of life where a man's property is measured not in terms of money but in terms of cattle and land. Her function is representative and her strength lies in being anonymous. She is just one of the many women of Kanthapura who responded to the call of the Mahatma, conveyed through Moorthy. Her faith in the Goddess Kenchamma, her respect for the local scholar Rangamma, her unquestioned affection for Moorthy and her trust in him, all these feelings she shares with other women of the village. No quality is given to her that detracts from her representative nature. *In this sense she has a choric function.*

The Manner of Narration

Achakka is both the narrator and the commentator. Her manner of telling the tale is, according to **Srinivas Iyengar,** "characteristically Indian, feminine with a spontaneity that is coupled with swiftness, raciness suffused with native vigour, and exciting with a rich sense of drama shot through and through with humour and lyricism." The learned critic adds, "the telling of the story gives the whole affair an *ithihasic*—at least a *puranic*-dignity. The narrative is hardly very straightforward : there are involutions and digressions, there are meaningful backward glances, there are rhythmic chains of proper names (Rachanna and Chandranna and Madanna ; Satamma and Rangamma and Puttamma and Seethamma), there are hypnotic repetitions and refrains, and there are also sheer poetic irridescences. A village, a picturesque region, an epoch of social and political change, a whole complex of character and motive, reason and superstition, idealism and cold calculation, all spring up before our eyes demanding recognition and acceptance ; it is almost a *tour de force.* Although Raja Rao has put the story into the mouth of a grandmother,—although the faminine touches and mannerisms, the seemingly effortless rotation of the tongue, the meandering sentences and massive paragraphs are characteristic of the narrator—there is nevertheless consummate art in all this riot of artlessness, there is careful selection behind the apparent abundant detail."

Her Comments

Not only does Achakka narrate, she also comments and her comments are balanced and shrewd. They serve to place both character and incident in a correct perspective, and are a constant check on over-idealisation. They serve to impart realism and authenticity to the narrative. Here are a few instances of her racy comments :

1. To tell you the truth, Bhatta began all this after his last visit to the city.

2. Rangamma did not understand all this, neither, to tell you the truth, did any of us.

3. Bhatta left us after harvest on a pilgrimage to Kashi. I tell you, he was not a bad man, was Bhatta.

Two Levels of Narration

The story is thus narrated simultaneously on two levels and thus acquires a dramatic character. Narration and description go hand in hand with a chorus-like evaluation of character and action. Achakka's evaluations are those of the novelist himself. They increase our understanding of events and character and serve as a unifying force in the work. *To a foreign reader this may appear jejune or obtuse. However, those familiar with the vernacular and* *with the circumlocution of Indian speech habits will be delighted with Achakka's narrative style and its gossipy digressions.*

Narration : Dramatic and Varied

The narration is dramatic, it varies according to the requirements of the action and the situation. The language, the accent, the tone, the tempo, constantly keep changing. The marching of the coolies to the Skeffington Coffee Estate is described in a language which reminds one of those calculatedly interminable sentences of a Gibbon, a Macaulay or a De Quincey, and described not with pomp and circumstance but in a heart-rending tone ; "half naked, starving, spitting, weeping, vomiting, coughing, shivering, squeaking, shouting, moaning, coolies with the children clung to their mothers' breasts, the old men to their sons arms, and bundles hung over shoulder and arm...winding through the twists of the Estate-path". And their joy and excitement on finding employment—"a four anna bit for a man-hand and a two anna bit for a woman-hand—and on finding rice and water, they cringed before the Sahib and fell on his feet in gratitude and that night they slept the sleep of princes."

A considerable part of the book is taken up with life on the coffee estate, the crudities and vulgarities of the Red-man; the humiliations of the poor and the helpless (except Bade Khan, the policeman, who has just to sneeze or cough and everybody will say 'I lick your feet') the sickness that broke them and the violation of their women's honour—all have been portrayed most vividly and convicingly to the last detail of credibility.

Use of Suspense

Moorthy has been released from jail and the villagers wait eagerly for his arrival. Their suspense and their anxiety have been adequately conveyed through the use of a repetitive language repleate with a sense of urgency : "And hearts began to beat and yet we saw no Moorthy, and yet no Moorthy, and yet no Moorthy, and yet not a hair of his head was seen, and we were silent as those in the sanctum at the camphor ceremony, yet no Moorthy and no Moorthy, and the bus had surely passed by the river over the bridge, and up the Santur Valley, and Rangamma got so anxious that he sent Pariah Lingayya to run and see, Pariah Lingayya ran and ran, and from the top of the road cried out, 'No, No,' and we all looked to this side and that and no Moorthy, and no Seenu either was to be seen. And our hearts began to beat like drums, and Ratna said, 'I'll see if he is come by the mango grove. And Ratna ran like a boy, and behind her ran young Chenna, and Chenna was followed by Cowherd Sidda ; and then came a voice from the Promontory, it was Sennu's and he was calling us, and we cried out, "what is it ? what?" and we rushed with the *kumkum* water spurting and splashing, and the flower garland tearing in our hands and the coconuts heavy, and what should we see in the Brahmin quarter but a cordon of policemen round Rangamma's house."

Piling Up of Images and Epithets

Achakka is garrulous, as a grandmother usually is, and words, words, words flow out of her mouth in quick succession. When a sense of largeness is to be conveyed there is a liberal piling up of epithets and images. The picketings and satyagrahas are narrated, we should say visualised, in this way, and the very atmosphere of those tumultous days conveyed to the readers. Coolies come out of the Gates of the Skeffington Cooffee Estate in large numbers and move towards the toddy booth. The sense of the largeness of their numbers is conveyed through a multiplicity of images and epithets.

Poetry and Fantasy

At other times, there is a mingling of fact and fancy and sheer poetry comes out of the narrator's lips as in the following rhythmic account of the coming of Kartik, the month of the festival of lights ; "*Kartik* has come to Kanhtapura.. with the glow of lights and the unpressed footsteps of the wandering gods ; while lights from clay-trays and red lights from copper-stands, and diamond lights that glow from the bowers of entrance-leaves ; lights that glow from banana-trunks and mango twigs, yellow lights behind white leaves, and green light behind yellow leaves, and white light behind green leaves ; and light curls through the shadowed streets, and hissing over bellied boulders and hurrying through dallying drains, night curls through the Brahmin Street and the Pariah Street and the Potters' Street and the Weavers' Street and falpping through the mango grove, hangs clawd for one moment to the giant pipal, and then shooting across the broken fields, dies quietly into the river—and gods walk by lighted streets...*Kartik* is a month of the gods."

In such passages the narrator becomes an inspired poet. Says Srinivas Iyengar, "There is a lilt and seductive rhythm, a cruious incantatory power, in this kind of speech which coils round one more and more, and involves one intricably in the experience. Words here are not mere words, they are more than blocks of stone ; they are indeed streams of suggestion, dark rooms with central lights to brighten them, waves of sound making haunting music." Elsewhere, the narrator freely mixes up men and gods, Gandhi is seen as Rama or Krishna and the Red-men as Ravana or Kali.

Conclusion

The narrative art of Raja Rao is the novel's crowning charm. Achakka's gossipy digressions and circumlocutions are in the hoary Indian tradition of story-telling. As Raja Rao himself tells us in *the Preface*, the repertory of a grandmother is always bright, fact and fancy, reality and imagination, men and gods, constantly mingle in her narration, and in this way the happenings in a remote, obscure, out of the way village are transformed into a *Gandhian* or *Gandhi-epic*. In this way instead of remaining a mere *sthala-purana* or regional novel, *Kanthapura* acquires the dimensions of an epic—the epic of India's struggle for freedom."

9. Plot and structure : Formlessness

The Indian Tradition : Episodes and Digressions

Kanthapura is a novel in the Indian tradition, and it is not to be judged by western standards. **David McCuthion** commits this mistake and so concludes that *Kanthapura* is no novel at all, for in it, "*all the central concerns of the western novel are absent*". Raja Rao answers such objections, in his *Preface* to the novel when he writes, "and our paths are paths interminable. The *Mahabharata* has 214,778 verses and the *Ramayana* 48,000. *Puranas* there are endless and innumerable. We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous 'ats' and 'ons' to bother us—we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought. This was and still is the ordinary style of our story-telling. I have tried to follow it myself in this story." In other words, the plot of the story is episodic. There are numerous digressions and there is much that is superfluous. The old narrator is garrulous and gossipy and brings in much that is heterogeneous and irrelevant into the compass of her tale. But all this does not mean that the novel is formless or amorphous. Quite to the contrary, it has a well-formed and well-organised structure, a coherent and well-knit plot.

The Main plot and the Sub-plot : Their Fusion

The plot of the novel is made up of a main-plot and a sub-plot. The main plot deals with the impact of the Gandhi-movement on a remote south Indian village, called Kanthapura, a village which is a microcosm of the macrocosm, for what happens in this remote village was happening all over India in those stirring decades. The sub-plot deals with the happening on the Skeffington Coffee Estate in the neighbourhood and throws a flood of light on the exploitation and brutality to which the Indian people were subjected by the foreign rulers. The two plots are fused into a single whole, for both expose the brutality of the Englishmen and the various ways in which they exploited the people, and later in the novel, the coolies of the coffee-plantation join the Satyagrahis from Kanthapura in their satyagraha outside the Toddy booth.

The Exposition

The plot has a beginning, a middle and an end. It begins with an account of the small south Indian village called Kanthapura, its locale, its crops, it is poverty, and the ignorant and superstitious nature of the people. Though it is a small village, it is divided into a number of quarters—the Brahmin Quarter, the Potters Quarters—the Sudra Quarter and the Pariah Quarter. The society is caste-ridden, it has its own local legends. Kanchamma is the Presiding goddess, and a detailed account is given of the legends connected with the benign goddess. Then follows an account of its people, and a number of characters, destined to play significant roles in the action are inroduced, petty rivalries and jealousies of the village society come to surface.

Development of Action

There is development of action with the arrival of Moorthy from the city, a staunch Gandhi man. Says **Narasimhaiah**, "*There are at least three strands of experience in the novel : the political, the religious and the social, and all the three are woven inextricably into the one complex story of Kanthapura*." The action is centred round Moorthy, and he is the confluence or the meeting point of these three strands. He is an educated man who has a true Brahmin's heightened awareness of his social and spiritual obligations and sets out to fulfil them, and he is best equipped for his task thanks to the fertilising impact of these life-making influences. After all Moorthy received his inspiration from Gandhi to whom all action of all kinds has its grounding in religion. "It is interesting to note that before there is ever any mention of Gandhi or Swaraj in the novel there is tremendous religious activity. Starting from an invocation to *Kenchamma*, goddess benign, to the end of the novel, religion seems to sustain the spirits of the people of Kanthapura. The action begins with the unearthing of a half-sunken *lingam* by Moorthy and its consecration. It is, by the way, symbolic of the growth of religion from the day the primitive man worshipped stock and stone, sang and danced round in ecstasy. The boys of Kanthapura had a grand feast to celebrate the occasion. And one thing led to another. Soon they observed *Sankara Jayanti*, *Sankara Vijaya*, etc., etc. This became the nucleus of social regeneration in Kanthapura in the true tradition of India where social reformers have invariably been prfoundly religious men. When Moorthy threw out a hint that somebody will offer a dinner for each day of the month there was spontaneous response from everyone and this is not stated by the novelist but comes home to us through the characters themselves : 'Let the first be mine', said Bhatta ; 'the second mine', said Agent Nanjundiah ; 'Third must be mine', *insisted* Pandit Venkateshiah. Note the verb *insisted* which suggests (*a*) a willing co-operation in team-work and (*b*) the issue of social prestige in a small community."

Mythical Technique : Organising and Patterning

Political propaganda is carried on in the guise of religion. The Harikatha-man, Jayramachar, tells strange *Harikathas*, in which there is a curious mingling of religion and politics. Gandhi is likened to Ram and the Red-man to Ravan, and the freedom struggle becomes a fight between the two incarnations of Good and Evil for the sake of *Bharat Mata* or *Sita.* The use of the mythical technique is kept up upto the very end. The past and the present are juxtaposed, there is a fusion of myth and legend with current politics, and in this way the texture of the novel gains in richness and complexity. Most heterogeneous material is thus organised and a form and pattern are imposed.

The Conflict

The action develops through conflict. Moorthy forms the Kanthapura Congress-committee, maintains contact with the city Congress, brings in newspapers, and keeps the people informed of the stirring events taking place elsewhere. In this way, though Gandhi does never appear on the scene, his presence is constantly felt. He goes about from door to door ; carrying message of *charkha* and *Swadeshi.* He, a Brahmin, but a true Gandhite, goes even to the Pariah Quarter with the message of the Mahatma. A Women's Volunteer corps is also organised. Efforts are thus made to bring about political, social and economic resurgence simultaneously. The Government, too, is not idle and soon he has to meet with stiff opposition. Policeman Bade Khan arrives on the scene, finds shelter on the Skeffington Coffee Estate, and soon is in league with Bhatta, the first Brahmin, and Waterfall Venkamma. Contacts are also maintained with the *Swami* in the city, who wields considerable influence and whose threat of ex-communication sends Moorthy's mother to death.

The Sub-Plot

Battle lines are sharply drawn and the atmosphere is tense. But before the battle actually begins, a detailed account is given of the goings on the Skeffington Coffee Estate. Into the calm valley of Himavathy there comes not merely Congress politics, but there is an exodus of population—poor and half-starved people—from below the Ghats, from Andhra and from Tamil and, armies of coolies march past to work in the Skeffington Estate owned by the Red-man. "And the marching of these coolies reminds one of those calculatedly interminable sentences of a Gibbon or a Macaulay or a De Quincey, and described not with pomp and circumstance but in a heart-rending tone : half naked, starving, spitting, weeping, vomiting, coughing, shivering, squeaking, shouting, moaning, coolies, with the children clung to their mothers breasts, the old men to their sons arms, and bundles hung over shoulder and arm...winding through the twist of the estate path". And their joy and excitement on finding employment—"a four anna bit for a man hand and a two anna bit for a woman hand—and on finding rice and water they cringed before the Sahib and fell on his feet in gratitude and that night they slept the sleep of princes". A considerable part of the book is taken up with life on the coffee estate, the crudities and vulgarities of the Red-man ; the humiliations the poor and the helpless suffer (Bade Khan, the police man, has just to sneeze or cough and everybody will say, 'I lick your feet'); the sickness that breaks them and the violation of their women's honour—all have been portrayed most vividly and convincingly to the last detail of credibility. "Life on the Red-man's estate with its brutalities and humiliations is, speaking in a limited way, like the sub-plot of a tragedy. It is part of the general tragedy depicted in the rest of the book; with this difference, though, that while their suffering brought the victims a chastening, ennobling feeling now and then, and left them with perhaps a distant hope, if any, suffering on the estate was soul-destroying and absolutely devoid of compensations."

Satyagrahas, Lathi-charge, Thrills and Sensations

As soon as the call comes from the city Congress, the Kanthapurians, lead by Moorthy, march to picket the toddy plantations, with shouts of *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai* and *Inqlab Zindabad.* There is a cruel lathi-charge, even women and children are beaten up, and a large numbers are arrested. Next follows the satyagrah outside the Toddy Booth near the gate of the Skeffington Estate. The workers come to drink, the Satyagrahis lie down in the path, as lathi blows after blows are showered on them. The entire atmosphere resounds with shouts of *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai.* And then the unexpected happens, the coolies side with the Satyagra his, refuse to march over their bodies, lie down by them and are brutally beaten up by the police. The two plots, thus, fuse and mingle and become a single whole. Those were thrilling, sensational times and the novelist has succeeded in conveying to the readers those thrills and sensations, exactly and precisely.

Climax and Denouement

There are countless arrests, and Moorthy is also arrested. He is tried and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. In his absence, Ratna takes up the work of the Congress and becomes the leader of the movement. Then comes the *No-Tax campaign.* Government repression and Police brutality reach a climax. Workers from Bombay arrive, their crops are reaped and taken away, and their houses burnt and destroyed. Women are dishonoured, and even children and old men are mercilessly beaten up. They are compelled to fly their native place, and are obliged to seek shelter in distant *Kashipur* where they are welcomed as, "the pilgrims of Gandhi". Kanthapura has been laid waste, the people have suffered terribly, but they experience a sense of fulfillment. The denouement while stressing tragic waste and desolation, also leaves the victims much chastened and ennobled.

Some Faults : Superfluity

It is a breathless tale, in the age old Indian tradition of story-telling. The narration consists of the stream of memory of its old narrator, and on the whole, the sequence of events is chronological. But the narrator, an old grandmother, is garrulous and so there enters much into the tale which could easily have been avoided. The long accounts of the life-story of advocate Sankar and advocate Seenappa could easily have been curtailed, for they are comparatively minor figures. The long digression into the nature, kind, etc., of snakes covering over four pages, has no relevance whatsoever. It is entirely superfluous and uncalled for.

Conclusion

But these are minor blemishes. They in no way detract from the many merits of the novel. Nor would we be justified in calling the novel 'formless' merely because of a few such digressions.

10. The style—Raja Rao's English

The Problem of Style—Raja Rao's Statement of It

One of the most serious difficulties faced by the Indo-Anglian novelist is the problem of a suitable medium of expression. He must use English in a way that is distinctively Indian and still remains English. He must so use, bend or break the language he uses, as to convey through it the feel of Indian life, convey through it the attitudes and responses that are characteristically Indian. In other words, he must evolve an Indian English, just as there is an American English, a Canadian English and even an Australian English. Raja Rao refers to this problem in his famous *Preface* to *Kanthapura*, a *Preface* which is a minor classic in itself. He writes, "the telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word *alien*, yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up—like Sanskrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression, therefore, has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American."

Ways of Solving It : Raja Rao's Contribution

Various Indo-Anglian novelists have experimented with the language they have used, and each has tried in his own way to evolve a suitable medium to express Indian sensibility, the very flavour of Indian life. These efforts have usually taken three directions. *First*, there have been literal translations of Indian idioms, phrases, proverbs, etc. *Secondly*, changes have been introduced in the syntax or structure of the language. It has been modified, bent or broken according to need. *Thirdly*, Indian imagery has been profusely used to convey the flavour of Indian life. Raja Rao has used these devices, with extraordinary success. In *Kanthapura* by his skilful use of language he has succeeded in conveying the distinctive modes of thinking, manners of observation and instinctive responses of the Kannada people. According to **Meenakshi Mukherji** he has done it so effectively, "that even those who are not closely acquainted with the rigid social structure of a South Indian village will notice how a man's caste can be ascertained from his mode of speech. The evolving of an Indian-English which is adequate enough to express Indian, even regional, flavour, without ceasing to be English, is Raja Rao's most significant contribution."

Use of Literal Translation

Raja Rao sometimes uses direct, literal translations of Indian or Kannada proverbs, idioms and phrases, but this devise is never over-done. as is the case with Mulk Raj Anand. His pages are never disfigured by the too frequent use of literal translations of Indian proverbs and abuse words, as is the case with Mulk Raj Anand. In *Kanthapura*, the village women speak of the cat that has, "taken to asceticism only to commit more sins". Raja Rao's use of this device is always in character. Such proverbs used by the old-narrator are entirely appropriate to her, and do not sound artificial or unnatural in the context in which they have been used. And Raja Rao never uses them too frequently. However, sometimes he uses expressions which are obviously not English and which have also no counterpart in *Kannada*. It is a falsification of language and is a serious fault. For Example, "He gave her a very *warmful* bed" ; "the old man was sitting on the Verandah, his hand upon his nose, deep *breathful* of meditation." But such expressions are much less frequent in him then in novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya.

Use of Indian Words

At other times, he uses words from the Indian languages directly in English without any translation or modification. But he realised that the English language can stand a very small dose of this device, and so he uses it very sparingly. He uses only words like *kumkum* or *aarthi* (which are really Sanskrit and, therefore, intelligible to most Indian readers) more for the sake of clarity than for any special effect. Nor does he use exclamations in *Kannada*.

Use of Indian Imagery

The flavour of *Kannada* comes out of the unobtrusive use of *Kannada* figures of speech and terms of reference. The following sentences taken at random from *Kanthapura* illustrate this point :

(1) *Postman Subbayya, who had no fire in his stomach, and was red with red and blue with blue.*

(2) *You are a Bhatta, and your voice is not a sparrow voice in your village and you should speak to your people and organize a Brahmin party. Otherwise Brahminism is as good as kitchan ashes...*

(3) *...and mother and wife and widow godmother went up to their lighted lizard-clucking homes.*

Writes **Meenakshi Mukherji**, "the important point in these three instances is not that the~expressions used are literal translations, but that they serve their purpose in their context, and they are more vivid than any other accepted English expressions that might have been used in their place. In quotation 3, the words, "lighted lizard-clucking homes", for example, convey a completely satisfying sense of security associated with the interior of a house after lighting time which is essential to these women (mother and wife and widow godmother), who have spent a long and uncertain day of struggle, picketing toddy-booths. Moreover, these sentences contain nothing that would be unintelligible or jarring to the reader who does not know *Kannada*, and that is more than what can be said about the linguistic experiments of most other Indo-Anglian writers."

Indian Syntax and Rhythms

Raja Rao uses English like a master, as one would use one's own mother tongue. English syntax and structure are modified and broken to suit his purposes. S. **Nagarajan** writes in this connection, "Raja Rao's aim is to create a style which will reflect the rhythms and sensibilities of the Indian psyche, and since it is in Sanskrit that the Indian mind has found its most consummate linguistic expression, he has tried to adapt his English style to the movement of a Sanskrit sentence." *Only his words are English, their organisation is Indian and entirely his own.* His use of English is marvellously and truly creative.

Dramatic Use of Language

Raja Rao's use of language is dramatic and truly creative. Says **Narasimhaiah** "the emotional upheaval that overtook Kanthapura could only find expression by breaking the formal English syntax to suit the sudden changes of mood and sharp contrasts in tone, by establishing a correspondence between perceptions and the images he could readly lay his hands on in the life around and by a fresh emphasis on old images and a completely different, in this case Kannada, intonation to English sentences. In other words it had to be a highly original style, a technical innovation indistinguishable form an essential Indian sensibility. Consider the wide range of feelings and attitudes from the beheviour of an Indian crowd. First, under police atrocities :

'While policemen beat the crowd this side and that side and graons and moans and cries and shouts and coughs and oaths and bangs and kicks are heard, while there is heard 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai, M...... ki......jai.' The massing of words corresponds to the massing of men in a crowd and the massing of upsurging emotions in response to police treatment.

But a temple atmosphere is different, though there will also be a flow of men to and from the temple :

'*People came and people went ; they banged the bell and touched the bull and took the flowers.*'

Is it a devotional prayerful approach to the goddess ? Well, it sounds like a prayer in our own languages, so intimately personal and fervent :

O Kenchamma, Protect us always like this through famine and disease, death and despair. O most high and bounteous. We shall offer you our first rice and our first fruit and we shall offer you saris and boidce cloth...' This has close affinites with poetry, indeed it sounds like the chanting of hymns, approximating to mantric poetry.

And what a far cry from this to the lingo of the cartman : "*he ho. cries the cartman and the bulls shiver and start.*' Or the vigorous, musical counting of measures of rice or ragi in the villages :

"*One, two, three, Hm-Four Hm, and the superstition which forbids the mention of six* (*in some parts of the country*) *seven and so six becomes God's extra,' Hm.*"

Now the more intimately used language of the dining hall : '*Take only this much milk, just this much, or take it Bhattre, only one cup more, just one.*' Just consider what the English equivalent would have meant for a people like us who need coaxing : "*Won't you have a second helping* ?" would not merely be annoying but ineffective.

Similarly, it would be absurd for a poor peasant to be known by his initials, but names become descriptive :

The bent-legged Chandrayya, *Waterfall* Venkamma, *Front House* people, *Fig-House* people, *nine-beamed house* Range Gowda, etc., etc.

But the status which birth, wealth and society confer on Bhatta don't stand him in good stead spiritually. And here is the homely equivalent of '*Not all the perfumes of Ababia can sweeten this little hand*' : '*the sinner may go to the ocean but the water will only touch his knees,*' but it bespeaks a distinct Indian sensibility—water as a time-honoured symbol of purification and the vivid image of the insufficiency of an ocean of water to wash this man's sins away, both the symbol and the image conveying an immediate comprehension of all they stand for to the illiterate villager. Where the sensibility is different, unless the expression also is different from English—the experience itself does not come through. Where the Englishman says, '*nip it in the bud*', Raja Rao, perhaps because of its aesthetically offensive imagery in the Indian context, has recourse to the Indian idiom, "*crush it in the seed*," which will not fail to have its startling effect in an agricultural community."

Lastly, a word about his plastic use of the English language to describe the ever-enlarging spheres of our relationships, for example, '*He is my wife's elder brother's wife's brother-in-law*,' both because the word 'cousin' doesn't convey the precise nature of the relationship and because our relationships do not stop with cousins or brothers and sisters-in-law. But expressed in English it helps one see the humour implicit in the change slowly coming over Indian society of dwindling social responsibility. The vagueness of these extended relationships is offset by the terms of endearment used to qualify the near one, as in '*our*' Seetharamu, 'our' Moorthy—in both cases, a literal translation of the Indian idiom.

Use of Imagery : Functional and Distinctive

Raja Rao's use of Imagery is equally distinctive and creative. His use of images is functional and not merely decorative. His similes and metaphors are drawn from the common, everyday objects and phenomena, hence they serve to clarify and elucidate. Writes **Meenkashi Mukherji**, "Images and metaphor are his natural mode of expression, and very little influence of English literature is discernible. His earlier work was full of fresh perception and a first-hand response to life. His language in the first two books is so richly strewn with similes that any passage quoted at random will serve to illustrate the elements of his style. Consider, for example, the following from *Kanthapura* :

> *...and when Moorthappa comes let the rice be fine as filigree and the mangoes yellow as gold, and we shall go out, horn and trumpet gong before us and break coconuts at his feet.*

The imagery here touches upon objects and experience that are distinctively Indian and faithfully conveys Indian sensibility. Raja Rao's style shows two distinct phases of development. In the earlier phase (in *Kanthapura*, and *The Cow of the Barricades*) there is a fond dwelling upon the concrete and the particular, be it the sky ("as blue as a marriage shawl", *Kanthapura*) or women ("some beautiful as new-opened guavas and the others tender as April mangoes", *The Cow of the Barricades*) or young boys ("bright as banana trunks," *Kanthapura*), which is markedly absent in the two later books published after an interval of about twenty-two years. In *The Serpent and the Rope* and *The Cat and Shakespeare* this concrete imagery is replaced by general reflections and abstract speculations."

Interpenetration of Matter and Manner

V.Y. Kantak is all praises for Raja Rao's style and points out that his use of English has made us regain our faith in the Indian's "Creative use of English". His English seems to spring from the Indian scene, the Indian manner, gesture and speech absorbs it, and yet suffers no distortion. "Word, phrase or sentence structure, the shifts and the modulations—all grow from the root. And it is English, chaste English, not borrowed and applied but taking the shape of the new material. The fluent, simple prose has a harmony which is the fruit of a complete interpenetration of matter and manner. His early classic *Kanthapura* shows him at his best in this respect. Raja Rao has added a new dimension to his language, that of symbolic suggestion. "The language has shaken off all traces of foreign acquisition and begun to assert its inalienable rights as an independent idiom. The word has become the perception."

Raja Rao's Contribution

Giving an estimate of Raja Rao's contribution as stylist, **Narasimhaiah** writes, "When it comes to style, the breath-taking long sentences, page-long sentences, repetitions of names and words, while sometimes necessary to build up the tempo of the commotion in Kanthapura, can also sound highly mannered and they do. But the author is not impoverished of stylistic devices to suit a wide range of emotional or mental states. In fact, the one outstanding contribution of Mr Raja Rao to Indian writing in English is to have struck new paths for a sensibility which is essentially Indian. While R.K. Narayan has invented a language which suits his purpose most adequately, it is not likely to be of much help except in minor ways to those that write fiction in English after him, unless they bring to fiction-writing gifts like his. Indian fiction in English can, it seems to me, make headway by continuing the Raja Rao line, which is to say one must have not merely his technique, but his amazingly high intellectual equipment and awareness of the Indian tradition—all of which should be possible to acquire in varying degrees by serious aspirants."

11. "Kanthapura" as a Sthala-Purana or regional novel

Regionalism Explained and Defined

A regional novel is a novel which deals with the physical features, people, life, customs, habits, manners, traditions, language, etc., of a particular locality. However, this does not mean that regionalism is mere factual reporting or photographic reproduction. The regional artist emphasises the unique features of a particular locality, its uniqueness, the various ways in which it differs from other localities. But as in all other art, so also in regional art, there is a constant selection and ordering of material. In other words, regional art is also creative. Through proper selection and ordering of his material the novelist stresses the distinctive spirit of his chosen region and shows, further, that life in its essentials is the same everywhere. The differences are used as a means of revealing similarities ; from the particular and the local, the artist rises to the general and the universal. The selected region becomes a symbol of the world at large, microcosm which reflects the great world beyond.

A New Sathala-Purana

Kanthapura is a regional novel in this larger sense. *Kanthapura* is a microcosm of the macrocosm, for what happens in Kanthapura was happening all over the country during those stirring days of the Gandhian freedom struggle. Besides, as Raja Rao tells us in the very first sentence of his well known *Preface* to the novel, every village in India has a rich *sthala-puran* or legendary history. *Kanthapura*, too, has such a legendary history, and the novelist has narrated it in detail for the benefit of his readers. *But he has also created a new sthala purana for this region dealing with the brave struggle and self-sacrifice of the people of Kanthapura for the sake of the freedom of their mother Bharat mata.* Thus *Kanthapura* is a great regional novel as well as a *sthala-purana* by itself.

The Village and the People : Universal Elements

Kanthapura is a regional novel, and as such we are given a detailed account of its topography, of its crops, of its poverty, of its division into various quarters—the Brahmin quarter, the Pariah quarter etc., and of the illiteracy, superstitions, petty rivalries and jealousies of its people. The novel is a portrait-gallery full of the portraits of a number of living, breathing human beings. There are both major and minor figures, and both come to life in the hands of the novelist. As the action proceeds, his presentation of the region gains in depth and complexity, and it is realised that *Kanthapura* is symbolic of a wider and larger world, that, in short, it is a microcosm of India herself. The picture is further enlarged and enriched by the presentation of the life of the workers on the Skeffington Coffee Estate symbolic of the suffering of the industrial workers under a colonial rule. *Kanthapura* is a great regional novel for in it the novelist rises from the particular to the general, to the depiction of the universal human passions, sorrows and suffering.

The Local Legend : Gooddess Kenchamma

Every village in India has its own *sthala-purana* or legendary history, and Kanthapura is no exception to this rule. It has a legend concerning the local goddess *Kenchamma* who protects the villagers from harm and presides over their destiny. We are told that Kenchamma is the mother of Himavathy, and then is given a detailed account of its past. "Kenchamma is our goddess. Great and bounteous is she. She killed a demon, ages ago, a demon that had come to ask our young sons as food and our young women as wives.

Kenchamma, came from the Heavens—it was the sage Tirpura who had made penances to bring her down—and she waged such a battle and she fought so many a night that the blood soaked and soaked into the earth, and that is why the Kenchamma Hill is all red. If not, tell me, sister, why should it be red only from the Tippur stream upwards, for a foot down on the other side of the stream you have mud, black and brown, but never red. Tell me, how could this happen, if it were not for Kenchamma and her battle ? Thanks heaven, not only did she slay the demon, but she even settled down among us, and this much I shall say, never has she failed us in our grief. If rains come not, you fall at her feet and say Kenchamma, goddess, you are not kind to us. Our fields are full of younglings and you have given us no water. Tell us, Kenchamma, why do you seek to make our stomachs burn ? ' And Kenchamma, through the darkness of the sanctum, opens her eyes wide—Oh if only you could see her eyelids quicken and shiver—and she smiles on you a smile such as you have never before beheld. You know what that means. That very night when the doors are closed and the lights are put out, pat-pat-pat, the rain patters on the tiles, and many a peasant is heard to go into the fields, squelching through gutter and mire. She has never failed us, I assure you, our Kenchamma."

Local Rituals

There is also an account of a number of local rituals. "There is the ritual of yoking the bulls to the plough under the Rohini Star or of the traditional belief that at the beginning of Kartik, gods can be seen passing by, "blue gods and quiet gods and bright-eyed gods" or to the different modes of appeasing the goddess Kenchamma. All, these make up the fabric of living of which the narrator is a part. Thus the reference to the rituals of ploughing, of worship and sacrifice, becomes a means of establishing the atmosphere in which the villagers live, as well as a device for concretising the point of view, *i.e.* delineation of the character of the unsophisticated narrator who can assimilate all facts into a mythical structure, for whom no fact become really significant unless it can be identified as part of a myth" **(Meenakshi Mukherji)**

The New Sthala-Purana : Mythicising of Local Heroism

Not only has the novelist given us an account of the legendary history of *Kanthapura*, he has also created a new *sthala-purana* for the region. This has been done by mythicising the heroism of the local hearts and heads in the cause of their motherland. As **Northrop Fry** points out in a myth, "*some of the chief characters are gods, other beings larger in power than humanity*," so also is the case with the novel. Moorthy is presented as a figure much above the common run of men. A dedicated, selfless soul, he is idealised to the extent of being regarded as a local Mahatma. And of course, there is the real Mahatma also, always in the background though nowhere physically present. The village women think of him as the Sahyadri mountain big and blue, and Moorthy as the small mountain. Range Gowda, the village headman, thus describes Moorthy :

> *He is our Gandhi. The state of Mysore has a Maharaja but that Maharaja has another Maharaja who is in London, and that one has another one in heaven, and so everybody has his own Mahatma, and this Moorthy who has been caught in our knees playing as a child is now grown up and great, and he has wisdom in him and he will be our Mahatma.*

Just as there is the local goddess Kenchamma who protects the village Kanthapura and a greater god who protects all, Moorthy is the local *avtar* while Gandhi is the greater deity. The *Harikatha* man raises Gandhi to the level of a god by identifying his activities with one particular feat of Krishna, though it does not always mean fidelity to facts :

> *You remember how Krishna when he was but a babe of four had begun to fight against demons and had killed the Serpent Kali. So too our Mohandas began to fight against the enemies of the country.........Men followed him, as they did Krishna, the flute-player ; and so he goes from village to village, to slay the serpent of the foreign rule.*

"If here the 'Kaliya-daman' offers a parallel to the destruction of the foreign rule, later on the battle between Rama and Ravana offers a similar mythical analogy. None of these analogies can be systematically followed through to find exact points of correspondence, but they do temporarily illuminate the historical situation of the thirties, and give an insight in the unlettered mind of the village people that Raja Rao has attempted to present in *Kanthapura*, the kind of mind in which myth and fact are not clearly distinguishable. Moreover, for such a mind a fact does not become significant until it can be related to a myth. For the grandmother in Kanthapura, Swaraj is Sita, Mahatma is Rama, and Jawaharlal is brother Bharata :

> *He will bring us Swaraj, the Mahatma. And we shall be all happy. And Rama will come back from exile and Sita will be with him, for Ravana will be slain and Sita freed, and he will come back with Sita on his right in a chariot of the air and brother Bharata will go to meet them with the worshipped sandal of the master on his head. And as they enter Ayodhya, there will be a rain of flowers.*

Mythicising of Facts : Its Advantages

"This mythicising of facts serves a two-fold purpose in *Kanthapura*. Its narrator is an old illiterate woman, and mingling of myth and fact would be her natural manner of observation and reflection. Thus, it is a device of characterizetion. *Secondly*, Raja Rao adheres to the Indian classical tradition by idealising or mythicising the central character. Moorthy is an idealized character, who, like

Christ, takes all the sins of the people upon himself and undergoes a penance for purification, a young man who conquers physical desire and self-interest. Indeed, in the context of modern European realistic tradition, he will appear unreal as a character. But this is not meant to be fiction in the realistic tradition ; it is a local legend, and therefore the presence of a god-like hero is more appropriate here. A myth necessarily deals with an idealised man or a man larger than life and Raja Rao uses the device of mythicising facts in order to give his hero that exalted status" **(Meenakshi Mukherji)**

Conclusion

To conclude : *Kanthapura* is a great regional novel, as well as an interesting *sthâla-purana*. The novelist rises from the particular to the general and by the use of myth and legend gives to the freedom struggle of the Kanthapurians an all India character. The weaving of ancient myths into the structure of the novel, gives to it the quality of timelessness which all great works of art have. By mythicising the heroic-struggle and self-sacrifice of the people of the south Indian village, he has created a new *sthala-purana*, a new local legend. The novel illustrates how new legends or sthala-puranas are made, how the ordinary and the commonplace acquires larger than life dimensions in the imagination of poets and bards, or gossipy narrators like Achakka.

11

Detailed, Chapter-wise Summary with Critical Comments

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1. The Village

Kanthapura is a small village in the district of Kara in Mysore, South India. It is situated on the slopes of the Western Ghats which form a wall along the Malabar coast facing the Arabian sea. It is situated by the river Himavathy the source of which lies in a mountain close-by, Cardamon, coffee and rice are the chief crops of the region, and there are forests of teak and Jack, of sandal and of sal. Roads that lead to Kanthapura are narrow and dusty. At night can be heard the creaking of carts taking the produce to the sea-shore where it is shipped to the country of the Red-men, the English rulers of India. Sometimes when the traders of the village, Rama Chetty and Subba Chetty, have some merchandise to transport, the carts stop at their doors to pick it up. The coming and the going of the carts has been described vividly and dramatically, so that we see the whole scene with our mind's eye.

Kanthapura is a small village of about a hundred houses. It is divided into a number of quarters. First, there is the Brahmin quarter. In this part some houses are quite big like those of Postmaster Suryanarayana and Patwari Nanjundia. There are also the Kannaya-House people and their house is the biggest. Waterfall Venkamma (so called because she is always moaning and weeping) is jealous of her widowed sister-in-law Rangamma who lives there. She has no child, yet lives in such a big house. Moreover, her parents have come to live with her, and in summer her brothers and brother's children also come there. This is intolerable to Waterfall Venkamma and she freely curses her sister. She would very much like to poison all of them. There are also the Temple House people and Fig tree House people in the Brahmin quarter and Venkamma is also jealous of them, for they are frequently invited to the Kannaya House, while she is not.

In this way, a hint is thrown of the jealousies and quarrels which are such a marked feature of village life, as of life everywhere.

Other people who live in the Brahmin quarter are Dore, the university graduate, who called himself a Gandhi man and had taken to dhoti and khadi. There is also Corner-House Moorthy, who has gone through life-like a noble cow and who lives with his old mother. He is loved and respected by the people of the village, and he is of the same age as Seemu, the son of the old woman, Achakka, who narrates the story. Moorthy is considered such a desirable youngman that even Coffee-planter Ramayya comes to offer him his daughter. "But the horoscopes did not tally, and they were all so glad." Here we get an instance of Raja Rao's use of verbal irony.

Besides the Brahmin quarter, there are also the Pariah quarter, a Potters' quarter, a Weavers' quarter, and a Sudra quarter. In the Pariah quarter, Beadle Timmayya's house is the most important. Another important person in the Pariah quarter is pock-marked Sidda. He was the richest man of the village, but his wife went mad, and he lost much of his money in her treatment. Bhatta, who plays an important part in the novel, and about whom we would be told later on, profited much from the illness of Sidda's wife.

The Potter's quarter is the smallest one. It has only five houses. Lingayya and Ramayya and Subbayya and Chandrayya owned the four big houses, and old Kamalamma had a little broken house at the end of the street where she spent her last days with her only son. Formerly, they say, the Potters' Street was very flourishing, but now, with all these modern Mangalore tiles, they've had to turn to land. But Chandrayya still made festival-pots, and for Gauri's festival we've always had our pots done by him. He makes our images too and he even sold them at the Manjarpur fair. The rest of the Potters were rather a simple, quiet lot, who tilled their lands and now and again went out to the neighbouring villages to help people to make bricks.

Walking across **Temple Square** from Potters Street, the first house you saw was that of **Patel Range Gowda**, one of the richest, but certainly most loved, elders. He often helped his fellow Sudras when they were in trouble. The little Kanthapurishwari temple was just on the corner between the narrator's own house and Subba Chetty's shop on the Karwar Road.

Like other villages of India, Kanthapura, too, has its superstitions. It belives in a number of gods and goddesses. The Goddess Kenchamma, whose abode is on the Kenchamma Hill is the presiding deity of the village. It is she who protects the villagers from famine and disease. It she who saves them from the Cholera or the small-pox. People suffering from these diseases get well only because of the blessings of the goddess. No doubt, some people die, but then such people are either sinners or those who have caught their disease in the city. We get another fine instance of Raja Rao's irony when he writes, "Then there was cholera. We gave a sari and a gold trinket to the goddess, and the goddess never touched those that are to live—as for the old ones, they would have died one way or the other anyway. Of course you will tell me that young Sankamma, Barber Channaya's wife, died of it. But then it was not for nothing her child was born ten months and four days after he was dead. Ten months and four days, I tell you; such whores always die untimely. Ramappa and Subbanna, you see, they got it in town and our goddess could do nothing. She is the Goddess of Kanthapura, not of Talassana. They ought to have stayed in Talassana and gone to Goddess Talassanamma to offer their prayers. The people have full faith in her and frequently pray to her :

Kenchamma, Kenchamma,
Goddess benign and bounteous,
Mother of earth, blood of life,
Harvest-queen, rain-crowned,
Kenchamma, Kenchamma,
Goddess benign and bounteous.

The people have full faith in the legend that long, long ago the goddess fought with, and killed, a demon which had laid waste the countryside. That is why a part of the hill is still red.

2. Moorthy. the Gandhi Man—The Temple

The village also has a small Kanthapurishwari's temple. It is on the main street promontory. It was constructed only three years ago, and soon became the centre of village life, as well as the cause of all the trouble which forms the substance of the novel.

It so happened that one day Moorthy dug out a half-sunk *Shiva-linga*, and suggested that it should be washed, and consecrated in a temple built in its honour. All in the Brahmin quarter welcomed the suggestion. So in the holidays when the city boys were in the village, they built mud-walls and put a tile roof over it. Thus the temple came into being, and the consecration ceremony was duly performed by Bhata. Rangamma gave a feast to celebrate the occasion. Then Postmaster Suryanarayana suggested that they should have a Shanker-Jayanthi. He had the text, and he himself will recite it. The idea was welcomed by all. It was also agreed upon, that everyday after the *Jayanthi* they would have a dinner, and somebody would offer it for each day of the month. Rangamma even offered to give dinner on all those days on which none else will be offering it. Thus the Jayanthi and the feasting went on day after day to the great delight of all concerned.

When the *Sanker-Jayanthi* ended, Moorthy suggested that they should have *Harikatha*. He knew a *Harikatha* man in the city, who is much honoured even by the Maharaja. He would gladly come to the village, if he is paid ten-rupees and cart and railway fare. They had full faith in Moorthy who was, "as honest as an elephant," and so they readily agreed to the suggestion. They were poor, but they gladly contributed one-rupee each towards the expenses. Some, like Rangamma, gave much more. Moorthy went from house to house collecting money. He did not hesitate to visit even the Pariah quarter, and collected one hundred and forty-seven rupees. He was in fact a follower of Gandhi who did not believe in caste, who believed in inter-caste marriage, and advocated the re-marriage of widows.

The Harikatha man whom Moorthy brought from the city was called *Jayaramachar*. He told strange Harikathas, for along with the gods and goddesses, he would-bring in Gandhi, the Swaraj and the Red-men. For example, one of the first of his *Harikathas* was as follows :

"In the great Heavens Brahma the Self-created One was lying on his serpent, when the sage Valmiki entered, announced by the two doorkeepers. 'Oh, learned sire, what brings you into this distant world ?' asked Brahma, and, offering the sage a seat beside him, fell at his feet. 'Rise up, O God of Gods I have come to bring you sinister news. Far down on the Earth you chose as your chief daughter Bharata, the goddess of wisdom and well-being. You gave her the sage-loved Himalayas on the north and the seven surging seas to the south, and you gave her the Ganges to meditate on, the Godavery to live by, and the pure Cauvery to drink in. You gave her the riches of gold and of diamonds, and you gave her kings such as the world has never seen. Ashoka, who loved his enemies and killed no animal ; Chandragupta, who had the nine jewels of wisdom at his court ; and Dharmaraya and Vikramaditya and Akbar, and many a noble king. And you gave her, too, sages radiating wisdom to the eight cardinal points of the earth, Krishna and Buddha, Sankara and Ramanuja. But, O Brahma you who sent us the Prince propagators of the Holy Law and Sages that smote the darkness of Ignorance, you have forgotten us so long that the redman have come from across the seas and the oceans to trample on our wisdom and to spit on virtue itself. They have come to bind us and to whip us, to make our women die milkless and our men die ignorant. O Brahma deign to send us one of your gods so that he may incarnate on Earth and bring back light and plenty to your enslaved daughter...' 'O Sage' pronounced Brahma, 'is it greater for you to ask or for me to say "yes" ? Siva himself will forthwith go and incarnate on Earth and free my beloved daughter from her enforced slavery. Pray seat yourself, and the messengers of Heaven shall fly to Kailas and Siva be informed of it.'

"And lo when the Sage was still partaking of the pleasures Brahma offered him in hospitality, there was born in a family in Gujrat a son such as the world has never beheld. As soon as he came forth, the four wide walls began to shine like the Kingdom of the Sun, and hardly was he in the cradle than he began to lisp the language of wisdom. You remember how Krishna, when he was but a babe of four, had begun to fight against demons and had killed the serpent Kali. So too our Mohandas began to fight against the enemies of the country. And as he grew up, and after he was duly shaven for the hair cermony, he began to go out into the villages and assemble people and talk to them, and his voice was so pure, his forehead so brilliant with wisdom, that men followed him, more and more men followed him as they did Krishna the flute-player ; and so he goes from village to village to slay the serpent of the foreign rule. 'Fight, says he, but harm no soul. Love all, says he, Hindu, Mohamedan, Christian or Pariah, for all are equal before God. Don't be attached to riches, says he, for riches create passions, and passions create attachment, and attachment hides the face of Truth—Truth must you tell, he says, for Truth is God, and verily, it is the only God I know. And he says too, spin every day. Spin and weave every day, for our Mother is in tattered weeds and a poor mother needs clothes to cover her sores. If you spin, he says, the money that goes to the Red-man will stay, within your country and the Mother can feed the foodless and the milkless and the clothless'. He is a saint, the Mahatma, a wise man and a soft man, and a saint. You know how he fasts and prays. And even his enemies fall at his feet. You know once there was an ignorant Pathan who thought the Mahatma was a covetous man and wanted to kill him. He had a sword beneath his shirt as he stood waiting in the dark for the Mahatma to come out of a lecture-hall. The Mahatma comes and the man lifts up his sword. But the Mahatma puts his hands on the wicked man's shoulders and says, 'Brother what do you want of me ?' And the man falls at the feet of the Mahatma and kisses them, and from that day onwards there was never a soul more devoted than he. And the serpent that crossed the Mahatma, a huge serpent too......"

Thus this Harikatha provides the finest example of Raja Rao's use of the mythical technique. The novelist goes to the past to find parallels for the present, and the past is used to glorify the present. Gandhi is thus glorified and raised to the level of Ram and Krishna who fought the Demons, as Gandhi was fighting the Red-man. That is why the novel has been called a Gandhi-epic.

In other words, the Katha was political propaganda in disguise. The news of it soon reached the government, and Jayaramachar was arrested. Moorthy looked sad for sometime. Then he and other young men of the village threw away their foreign clothes and became Gandhi men. A fews days later Policeman Bade Khan came to Kanthapura.

3. Bade Khan, the Policeman

Bade Khan is the symbol of Government authority in Kanthapura. He is posted in the village following the arrest of Jayramachar, the Harikatha man. The first problem Bade Khan has to face is that of accommodation. He goes from door to door in search of a house but to no use. He approaches Patwari Nanjundia, who frankly tells him that he is in no position to help him.

Then he comes to Patel Range Gowda ; the tiger of the village. The Patel receives him coldly, and does not even ask him to sit. When Bade Khan reminds him that he is a representative of the government and it is his duty to help him, an officer of the Government, the Patel coldly replies that the govenment pays him to collect the revenue, and not for searching houses for others. It is not a part of his duty, and so he will not do it. Disappointed, Bade Khan leaves him, with threats and curses But the Patel is not a man to care for such threats.

When Bade Khan fails to get a houses in Kanthapura, he goes to the Skeffington Coffee Estate close-by, and the white owner of the plantation, at once provides him with one of the quarters meant for the workers on the estate. There Bade Khan settles down with one of the women workers as his wife. The people of Kanthapura supposed that he was just a passing policeman who had gone away. But they were mistaken; only a few days later he was seen prowling about the village.

4. Bhatta, the First Brahmin

We now get a detailed account of the life and character of Bhatta, the Government agent. Bhatta is rich and is much respected in the village, but he began life very humbly. In his youth, he will go about the village in a lion cloth with a copper pot in his hand. He will tell the days of the important festivals, and the most auspicious days for a marriage for a small fee. He officiated as priest on the occasion of a marriage, and was never late for a funeral dinner. He was always the first Brahmin to arrive on such occasions. He was polite and smooth tongued, and so was liked by the people.

He lived frugally and saved every possible pie. The small fees he would get would go down in a chest kept in the house for the purpose. His wife and child were often put to great hardship, but he did not care for it. In this way, he hoarded the large sum of three hundred and fifty rupees.

With this amount, he started money-lending in a small way. He was polite and always pretended to help those who came to him, but all the same fleeced than by charging exorbitant rates of interest. The more pressing the need, the greater the exploitation. In this way, his money multiplied fast, and he began to advance larger amounts. Now he would mortgage lands and houses of his debtors, and as the debt could never be repaid, he soon came to own much landed property. By the time the story opens, he is the owner of nearly half of the village.

Then as good luck would have it, his poor neglected wife Savithri died. She had gone to fetch water from the village, her foot slipped, and she fell down and died. Soon Bhatta married a second time. His second wife was a mere child at the time of marriage, but she brought by way of dowry one thousand in cash and five acres of wet land. As she was the daughter of a rich landlord, Bhatta also gained much in prestige and social respect.

Fortune smiled on Bhatta. He grew richer and richer, and he could lend more and more money, charge high rates of interest, and cheat the poor and the needy in the transactions. All the while he will pretend to help them, and earn their gratitude.

To earn more money, he helped the poor, ignorant people of the village in other ways also. When they had some law case and needed a lawyer in the city, Bhatta was the man to help them. He will introduce them to advocate Seenappa who would undertake the case for a small fee. Bhatta will earn their gratitude, and also he paid a small coin or two for his pains. He would also write petitions for them for a small fee, and thus save them the trouble of going to the city and spending a much larger amount there. Thus he was constantly toing and froing between the village and the city, was constantly involved in legal matters. In this ways, his knowledge of law increased, and he took to settling petty disputes himself, always for a fee. Thus he continued to grow in wealth as well as in social respect. So clever was he that those whom he exploited were grateful to him for ever afterwards.

Such is Bhatta's position at the time, Jayaramachar is arrested, and Moorthy turns a Gandhi man. In the beginning he took keen interest in Gandhi Bhajans, but suddenly he turned hostile to the Gandhi movement. This happened after one of his frequent visits to the city. On his return he went about the Brahmin quarter telling people that the *Swami* (in the city of Karwar) would ex-communicate all of them, if Moorthy did not stop going to the Pariah quarter and mixing with the Pariahs. *It is apparent that he had turned a Government agent to work against Moorthy and other Gandhi men of the village. Thus the tension and conflict in the novel results from the clash of these two opposite forces—the Gandhi movement for freedom, and government repression. The one is represented by Moorthy and his friends, and the other by Bhatta and Bade Khan.*

5. Tensions and Conflicts : Death of Narsamma

It was the arrest of Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, that made Moorthy a Gandhi-man in right earnest. Months earlier while a college student in the city, he had heard Mahatma Gandhi speaking in a public meeting. He was very much moved by his words. They seemed to come from his very heart, and so went deep down into the heart of the audience. After the speech Moorthy went upto Gandhi and offered himself as a servant and devotee. On his advice he decided to give up his foreign clothes and foreign education, took to wearing Khadi kurta and dhoti and became a devoted follower of the Mahatma. But he did not do much to further the cause so dear to the Mahatma.

After the arrest of Jayaramachar, he again went to the city, and returned after a few days later with the necessary instructions. He was loaded with publicity material, cotton and spinning wheels. Henceforth, he was seen constantly going to Kannayya House and would remain there for hours together. It was soon apparent that the big house had become the office of the village Congress Committee, or the Congress House. Rangamma took keen interest in the Congress movement. There also lived with her, her neice Ratna, a lady of progressive views. She was a widow, but she did not live like a widow. She was a modern in her dress and in her views. She took keen interest in the work of the Congress, and there are frequent references to the mutual attraction of Ratna and Moorthy. Perhaps, they loved each other though they do not express their love in the course of the novel.

Moorthy and the other educated boys of the village now went from door to door distributing free charkhas and explaining the advantages of charkha-spinning to the people. He went to the women in each quarter of the village—the Brahmin quarter, the Pariah quarter, the Sudra quarter, etc. He would lucidly explain the message of Gandhi to the ignorant village-folk :

'Sister, the Congress is giving away free spinning-wheels. Will you spin, sister ? You see, you have nothing to do in the afternoons after the vessels are washed and the water drawn, and if you spin just one hour a day, you can have bodice-cloth of any colour or breadth you like, one bodice-cloth of any colour or breadth you like, one bodice-cloth per month, and a sari every six months. And during the first month, the cotton is free.'

'My son, we have weavers in the village. There is Chennayya and Rangayya', the women would answer.

'Yes' sister. But they buy foreign yarn, and foreign yarn is bought with our money, and all this money goes across the sea. Our gold should be in our country. And our cotton should be in our country', Moorthy would explain. Once they understood, most of them took a spinning-wheel from him. Post-Master Suryanarayana took two, and Pandit Venkateshia and Snuff Sastri one each, and Rangamma's widowed sister Kamalamma and her daughter Ratna took one too.

Moorthy visited all the quarters of the village distributing free spinning-wheels.,.He was sometimes asked, 'But tell me, my son, does the Mahatma spin ?'

'The Mahatma, sister ? Why every morning he spins for two hours soon after his prayers. He says spinning is as purifying as praying', Moorthy would tell them.

The news of what Bhatta had said at the Kannyya House was soon all over the village. It reached the ears of Narsamma also, the old, widowed mother of Moorthy. Her daughters were all married, and she lived alone in the house Moorthy. There was no one else to look after her, and she loved Moorthy. She was a simple, old woman, superstitious and orthodox. The very thought of ex-communication struck terror into her heart. The very idea was shocking to her. Narasamma had been bitterly disappointed when Moorthy had given up his college education and thus shattered her dreams regarding Moorthy's bright and glorious career. He had also rejected all the proposals of marriage which came, saying that he did not want to marry. The poor old lady had bravely borne all this, but ex-communication was too much for her. She trembled and big tears rolled down her eyes, when she was told that her son would be ex-communicated by the Swami, and the whole village because of him, if he did not give up the Pariah business. She decided that never would she permit her son to dishonour his family.

Moorthy was in the city at the time, and he returned to Kanthapura on a glorious summer. His return has been graphically and vividly described, and we see the whole scene with our mind's eye :

> The day dawned over the Ghats, the day rose over the Blue Mountain and, churning through the grey, rapt valleys, swirled up and swam across the whole air. The day rose into the air and with it rose the dust of the morning, and the carts began to creak round the bulging rocks and the coppery peaks, and the sun fell into the river and pierced it to the pebbles, while the carts rolled on and on, fair carts of the Kanthapura fair—fair carts that came from Maddur and Tippur and Santur and Kuppur, with chillies and coconut, rice and ragi, cloth, tamarind, butter and oil, bangles and kumkum, little pictures of Rama and Krishna and Shankara and the Mahtma, little dolls for the youngest, little kites for the elder, and little chess pieces for the old—carts rolled by the Sampur knoll and down into the valley of the Tippur stream, then rose again and groaned round the Kenchamma Hill, and going straight into the temple grove, one by one, with lolling bells and muffled bells, with horn protectors in copper and back-protectors in lace, they all stood there in one moment of fitful peace ; 'Salutations to Thee, Kenchamma, goddess Supreme'—and then the yokes began to shake and the bulls began to shiver and move, and when the yokes touched the earth, men came out one by one, travellers that had paid a four-anna bit or an eight-anna bit to sleep upon pungent tamarind and suffocating chillies, travellers who would take the Pappur carts to go to the Pappur mountains, the Sampur carts to go to the Sampur mountains, and some too that should tramp down the passes into the villages by the sea, or hurry on to Kanthapura as our Moorthy did this summer morning. Moorthy with a bundle of khadi on his back and a bundle of books in his arms.
>
> He skirted the temple flower-garden and, hurrying, rounded Boranna's Toddy Booth and crossing the high-way, he rushed up the village road to the Panchayat mound, turned to the left, followed Bhatta's Devil's field, where Pariah Tippa was weeding, jumped across Seethamma's stile and went straight though the back yard. May be Ratna would be at the well, he thought. But Ratna was not there and the rope hung over the pulley, solemn and covered with flies ; so

he ran over the Temple Promontory and straight across the Brahmin Street Corner to Rangamma's house, but, seeing that Rangamma had not yet returned from the river, he threw the bundles into the Congress-room and walked back to see his mother, who sat by the threshold, her bundle of dirty clothes beside her, herself unwashed and morose.

The sentences are long, bnt they are vivid and picturesque. It is a fine piece of poetic-prose and the rhythm echoes the onward movement of the carts.

As Moorthy tried to touch the feet of his mother, she pushed him away angrily and said, "Go away, I never want to see your face again."

'But what is all this about, Mother ?' asked Moorthy.

'What ? Don't talk like an innocent. Go and stand on the steps like a Pariah. I don't even want your shadow to fall on me. I have had enough of it.'

'But why, Mother ?'

'Why ? Go and ask the squirrel on the fence I don't know. Go away, and don't show your face to me again. Not until you have been purified by the Swami.' She rushed down to the river, where she banged her clothes because the other women were still banging theirs. The rhythmic movement calmed and soothed her. She went home ashamed of her anger. She cooked a meal for Moorthy, for surely he must be hungry having been away from home. She longed for him to come so that they could make their peace. But where was he ? Finally there were footsteps at the door but they weren't Moorthy's. It was Bhatta who had come. Moorthy had apparently been very angry with Bhatta for saying that Swami was going to excommunicate him.

Moorthy had said, 'Let the Swami do what he likes. I will go and do more and more Pariah work. I will go and eat with them if necessary. Why not ? Are they not men like us ? And the Swami, who is he ? A self-chosen fool. He may be learned in the Vedas and all that. But he has no heart. He has no thinking power.'

'And what shall I say to that, Narasamma ?' asked Bhatta.

So Bhatta's soothing only made things much worse for Narasamma. From that day on, mother and son did not speak to each other again. He sat and ate his food on the kitchen doorstep, and she in the kitchen. We all noticed how thin and shrivelled up Narsamma was becoming, but there was nothing we could do to help.

Moorthy visited the Pariah quarter more and more. When Bhatta saw that his threats were of no avail, he went to the city. He returned two days later and told Narsamma that the *Swami* had excommunicated Moorthy, his whole family and all the generations to come. That very night, Narsamma rushed towards the river, and fell down unconscious in a field. She was found dead in the morning. She was cremated where she lay, but Bhatta refused to perform the funeral rites. That very night Moorthy left for some unknown destination where the last rites were performed.

On his return to the village, he lived at Kannyya House. They gave him food at the Kitchen door as they would to a Pariah, but he persisted with his work. He frequently visited the Pariahs and he and his friends began teaching them Hindi, Arithmetic, etc. Seema also tought them. Then it was decided that Moorthy would go to the Skeffington Coffee Estate, and there also he would teach the Pariahs. In his usual dramatic way the novelist tells us, "Moorthy would go there to-morrow".

6. The Skeffington Coffee Estate

The scene now shifts to the Skeffington Coffee Estate. It was a huge coffee plantation which stretched all over the hills and valleys round Kanthapura. It is a difficult to give an idea of its vastness. Some, said that it covered an area of more than ten thousand acres. Its founder owner was an Englishman who was known as the "Hunter-Sahib" as he moved about with a hunter in hand, now whipping this worker and now that to make them work faster. By the time of the present story, he was dead and his place had been taken by his young nephew.

The Coolies who worked on the Estate were recruited from the plains below the Ghats stretching upto the river Godavery. A foreman or *maistri* as he was called was sent from time to time to recruit coolies according to need. They were enticed to leave their hearth and home by false promises. They were given one rupee each as advance, and were promised a four-anna bit for a man and a two-anna bit for a woman as daily wages. They were also told that they would get plenty of white rice, and that they would merely be required to pick coffee leaves. They would not be put to any hard labour. The foreman would speak to them kindly. He would smile on them. The simple, poverty stricken people were taken in by-these promises, and came in large numbers with their belongings to work on the Estate. *Their march to Skeffington Coffee Estate has been described by Raja Rao at length in his usual graphic and picturesque style* . armies of coolies marched past the Kenchamma Temple, half-naked, starving, spitting, weeping, vomiting, coughing, shivering, squeaking, shouting, moaning coolies—coolies after coolies passed by the Kenchamma Temple, the maistri before them, while the children clung to their mother's breasts, the old men to their sons' arms, and bundles hung over shoulder and arm and shoulder and head ; and they marched on past the Kenchamma Temple and up to the Skeffington

Coffee Estate—coolies from below the Ghats, coolies, young men, old men, old women, children, baskets, bundles, pots, coolies passed on—and winding through the twists of the Estate path—by the Buxom-pipal bend, over the Devil's Ravine Bridge, by the Parvatiwell Corner—they marched up, the maistri before them."

It is like the march of an army, and the impression created is that of vast, multitudes on the move. Raja Rao's habitual use of an array of rhyming words—starving, spitting, weeping, vomiting, etc.—is to be noted.

Thus were the Coolies brought to the coffee plantation. Once they were there the manners of the Foreman changed, and he grew harsh and threatening. They were exploited in many ways. All promises were forgotten. No wages were given. Indeed, the white owner did not even know that they had promised four anna bit for a man and two anna bit for a woman. They were given small huts to live which they had to repair or thatch themselves. They were provided with a frugal diet, and were made to work hard from five in the morning till late in the night. If any body took rest or was slow, he was severely whipped by the maistri who was ever on the watch. No wages were paid, and the old hands knew that one who came to the Estate once, never went out of it again. He must work, suffer and die there.

The workers were also exploited sexually. The white Sahib would have this or that woman who tickled his fancy. If a woman refused him, the husband's or father's wages were cut or he was given a whipping. Once when a Brahmin workman refused to send his daughter, the Sahib flew into such a rage that he shot the Brahmin father dead with his pistol. Of course, the Sahib promised to pay about two thousand rupees as damages to the dead man's widow and children. But eventually he paid nothing because the Red-man's Court forgave him. But everyone knows that now the Sahib will never touch a Brahmin girl and even if a Pariah says, 'No', the foreman will very rarely be sent to drag her up in the middle of the night.

Then the workers was also exposed to danagers and diseases of various kinds. The Estate was infested with snakes, and many died of snake-bits, while at work. In a long degression covering about three to four pages, we are told a great deal about the nature of snakes, and about the different kinds of snakes which frequented the Estate. There were deadly green snakes, and there were also flying snakes. Such long digressions are entirely superfluous. They in no way further the action, and create the impression of formlessness. Indeed, this criticism has often been levelled against the novel.

Besides this, there were heavy rains and the workers would have to work in rains drenched to their very skin. With the rains, there would come Malaria and take a heavy toll of life. Men women and children would die in large numbers. No doubt, the

Sahib would distribute pills among the coolies, but they were superstitious and many would not take the pills. They also suffered from cough, vomitting and dysentry. Many would have liked to go back to their homes but they had no money and anybody who dared to ask for his wages was mercilessly beaten.

In short, the coolies were a miserable lot, and had to suffer terrible hardships. We have already noted that Bade Khan was staying at the Estate, and his arrival had further strengthened and encouraged the Sahib. Now an officer of the law was also with him. The majority of the coolies were Pariahas. But there were also a few Brahmins who could not be suppressed so very easily. Among them were two young Brahmin clerks Gangadhar and Vasudev of progressive and enlightened views. They took the Pariahs to Kanthapura to take part in the Gandhi-bhajan. It were they who invited Moorthy to come to the Estate to teach the ignorant coolies. They said, writes the novelist, "the Pariahs must learn to read and to write, and when they can do this they can speak straight to the Sahib and ask for this and that, money and material and many holidays. Why should not Pariaha Rachanna and Sampanna learn to read and to write ? They shall. And Bade Khan can wave his beard and twist his moustache. What is a policeman before a Gandhi's man ? Tell me, does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant ?" Raja Rao's use of graphic similes and metaphors is to be noted.

On evening when Moorthy is to come to Skeffington Coffee Estate to teach the Pariahs, they all wait eagerly for him at the gates of the Estate. It is dark, but a light is seen moving up at a distance. Bade Khan is also seen prowling about lathi in hand. A tense atmosphere, thick with suspense and foreboding, is skilfully built up by the novelist, by noticing the movement of the light, and the movements and whisperings of Bade Khan. It is done so skilfully that we see the entire incident with our minds' eye.

At last Moorthy does come up, but he is stopped at the gates of the Estate by Bade Khan. He tells Moorthy, "You cannot enter the gates of the Estate."

'I am a free man, Police Sahib', answered Moorthy.

'Free men you may be in your palace. But this is the Skeffington Coffee Estate. And these are Skeffington Coffee Estate coolies. You'd better take care of your legs. I've orders.'

'Coolies are men, Police Sahib. And according to the laws of your own government and that of Mr Skeffington, no man can own another. I have every right to go in.'

'You will not cross this gate.'

'I shall'.

By now Vasudev had come with Gangadhar and others. The foreman and his supporters had also come. There was so much swearing and cursing and hurling of abuses. A fierce fight follows ; there was whipping and pulling of hair and beards. The women fell upon the foreman and Bade Khan, and would have torn them to shreds had not Moorthy shouted.

'No beatings, sisters. No beatings, in the name of the Mahatma.'

Whereupon the foreman got up and started whipping the coolies up the Estate path, while Vasudev led Moorthy down to Kanthapura for the night.

The following morning the foreman threw Rachanna and his wife with their two orphaned grandchildren out of the hut at the Skeffington Estate. Three were given shelter by Patel Range Gowda. And that was how they came to live in Kanthapura. It was after this that Moorthy began his 'Don't-touch-the-government campaign'.

7. Moorthy's Fast

Before starting his, "Don't touch the government campaign', Moorthy decided to undertake a fast for self-purification. He decided that the he would fast for three days, and would take nothing but salt water thrice a day. He thought such a fast necessary, because he felt that he had not lived upto the teaching of the Mahatma. He himself was not pure, and that was why so much of violence had taken place at the Skeffington Coffee Estate. They should have loved even Bade Khan. They could not do so, for there was hatred in him. His own hatred polluted his followers. The fault lay with him and, therefore, he should purify himself through fasting. Only then would he be able to practise love, truth and Ahimsa as taught by the Mahatma.

So he began his fast in the temple. At night fall when there was none else in the temple, Rangamma tried to offer him a banana, but Moorthy refused it firmly. Ratna, often came to see him, and Moorthy wondered how he had ever thought of her as other than a sister. He had sound sleep, but the next day he felt much weaker. Memories crowded in upon him, and he remembered this incident and that. A number of people came to see him. Waterfall Venkamma also came and hurled abuses at him. 'Ah, the cat has begun to take to asceticism,' says she, 'only to commit more sins. Ah, son when did you begin to lie to your neighbours ? As though it were not enough to have polluted our village with your pariahs. Now you want to pollute us with your gilded purity. Wait, Wait when you come out of this counting of beads, I shall give you a fine welcome with my broomstick.' But Moorthy did not mind her. He resolved that he would love even his enemies, as was taught by the great Mahatma.

On the third day he felt so weak that he could not go to the river. When he tried to stand, he felt dizzy and had to sit down. But there was peace within his soul. His soul was irradiated with ineffable bliss. A number of villagers came to see him in the evening, and they had bhajans. But Moorthy noted with regret that not many Brahmins had come.

The next morning Moorthy broke his fast. He felt lighter in limb and lighter in soul. Then he walked out to preach "Don't touch the government campaign".

8. Kanthapura Congress Committee

First, Moorthy went to Range Gowda. He was an influential man and if he joined the Congress, the others in the village would also do so. Bhatta had already been to him, and the Patel had sent him away angry and frustrated. It was clear that the Patel did not like Bhatta, and that his sympathsie were with Moorthy and the Congress.

Gradually Moorthy came to the point and told the Patel of his plans. "This is what is to be done. We shall start a Congress group in Kanthapura, and the Congress group of Kanthapura will join the Congress of All India. You just pay four annas or two thousand yards of yarn per year, and that is all you have to do, and then you become a Congress member. And you must vow to speak truth, and wear no cloth but the khadi cloth."

'Oh yes, Moorthappa. If you think there is no danger in it. I see no objection to joining it. Tell me only one thing : Will it bring us into trouble with the Government ?'

Thus Moorthy thinks over and then he says, 'This is how it is, Range Gowda. Today it will bring us into no trouble with the Government. But tomorrow when we shall be against the Red-Man's Government it will bring us into trouble. You see Bade Khan is already there.........'

'Ah' says Range Gowda. 'And I shall not close my eyes till that dog has eaten filth', but Moorthy interupts him and says such things are not to be said, and that hatred should be plucked out of our hearts, and that the Mahatma says you must love even your enemies. The Patel did not agree with this, but all the same he consented to be a member of the Congress and to do as Moorthy, "the learned one" would advice him to do.

Then Moorthy went to the weavers quarter and met their Elder, Ramayya. When Ramayya heard that Range Gowda had agreed to join the Congress, he also readily agreed to do so. Then Moorthy went to the Potter's quarter and their Elder Siddayya also was easily persuaded to take up the work of the Congress. However, in the Pariah quarter Moorthy was put to a severe trial. The elder Rachanna was out, and his wife invited him in, and offered him a glass of milk. Till now Moorthy had never crossed thethreshold of a Pariah. And now he was compelled not only to enter in, but also to accept milk. He refused, but Rachanna's wife insisted that he should take at least one sip. Moorthy could not refuse, and with trembling hands and a fearful heart he just touched the glass with his lips. After all he was a Brahmin, and despite all his principles, Moorthy could not eat or drink in a Pariah's home. It is to be noted that Raja Rao has humanised the character of Moorthy. He has not been presented as a god or a hero or an uncommon individual with no human weakness. Rather, his faltering, his prayers, his touching of the holy thread, have been carefully noted, and he is presented as an ordinary creature of flesh and blood, with common human weaknesses.

Soon, he is surrounded by a number of Pariah women and children. They are simple, ignorant people and they do not understand the message of the Mahatma, nor the significance of Charkha-spinning. They frankly tell Moorthy that they would do as their manfolk tell them to do. Disappointed Moorthy leaves them, promising to return in the evening when Rachanna would be back home.

Moorthy hurries to Rangamma and tells her of what had happened. He has his bath and changes his clothes, and drinks a little Ganges water, and in this way purifies himself, as a true Brahmin should after he has been polluted by contact with a Pariah. The caste-system is too firmly entrenched in Indian Society, and even enlightened men like Moorthy are victims of it. Even they have not the courage to break the chains of caste and creed.

In the evening, Moorthy again takes a round of the village trying to persuade people to join the Congress and follow the Mahatma. Rachanna, Madanna, Lingayya, and others all agree to do as he will ask them to do. So the next day, with the blessings of the Patel Range Gowda, a meeting of the villagers is called to elect the members of the Kanthapura Congress Committee or Panchayat. First there are bhajans and the gods are taken out in a procession. Moorthy was elected as the President and they said that he was their Mahatma. Range Gowda was elected as the Protector and then were also elected twenty-one members. In this way was formed the Congress Committee of twenty-three members. They all vowed to spin everyday, to practise Ahimsa and to seek truth. The membership fee at the rate of four-anna for one member was duly collected and sent to the Provincial Congress Committee. A few days later, when Moorthy's picture was published in the papers, their joy and pride knew no bounds. And they all said, "Our Moorthy is a great man, and they speak of him in the city and we shall work for him', and from then onwards we all began to spin more and more, and more and more, and Moorthy sent bundles and bundles of yarn, and we got saris and bodice cloths and dhotis, and Moorthy said the Mahatma was very pleased."

9. Marriage of Venkamma's Daughter

Bhatta, of course, did not take kindly to the formation of the Congress Committee. He must put an end to the nonsense, otherwise the trouble will spread. Moorthy's fast had its effect, and despite the ex-communication he was still respected and followed by the villagers. He thought and thought over the matter, and by way of revenge, decided to charge' much higher rates of interest from those who joined the Congress. He would ruin them by attaching their farms for non-payment of his debt.

In order to break up the movement he needed some powerful supporter in the village. In the city, he had the *swami*, but so far he had none in the village. He thought long and deep, and finally decided that Waterfall Venkamma would serve his purpose best. She had a daughter, Ranga, of marriageable age, and he would earn her gratitude by arranging the marriage of Ranga with Advocate Seenappa who had just lost his wife. No doubt, he had three children and was over thirty years of age. But all this did not matter, for he was rich and Ranga would have all possible comforts in his home.

Waterfall Venkamma was tempted by the offer and the marriage was soon arranged. The womenfolk of the village were delighted, for Venkamma promised that there would be feasting and merry-making for a week, even for ten days. They would wear their best sarees and it would be great fun. But when the marriage procession came they were disappointed, for the bridegroom was a middle-aged man, with fallen teeth and a big twisted moustache. But all this was soon forgotten in the feasting and merry-making that marked the occasion, and the ornaments and sarees that were brought for the bride. Ranga was really lucky to have married so well.

It is to be noted that the marriage of Ranga described so vividly and at such length, in no way contributes to the action of the novel. But a whole chapter has been devoted to it. Such superfluity has exposed the novel to the charge of formlessness.

10. Moorthy's Arrest

The chapter opens with a long passage describing the month of Kartik, the month of lights, the month when gods walk the streets of the village, and lights are lighted so that the people may see the gods passing by. It is one of the finest passages of poetic prose in the novel, and brings out fully Raja Rao's command over the English language. *As an illustration of the novelist's rhythmic-prose we quote the opening sentence of the chapter* :

"*Kartik* has come to Kanthapura, sisters—Kartik has come with the glow of lights and the unpressed footsteps of the wandering gods; white lights from clay-trays and red lights from copper-stands, and diamond lights that glow from the bowers of entrance-leaves ; lights that glow from banana-trunks and mango twigs, yellow light behind white leaves, and green lights behind yellow leaves, and white light behind green leaves ; and night curls through the shadowed streets, and hissing over bellied boulders and hurrying through dallying drains, night curls through the Brahmin Street and the Pariah Street and the Potters' Street and the Weavers' Street and flapping through the mango grove, hangs clawed for one moment to the giant pipal, and then shooting across the broken fields, dies quietly into the river—

and gods walk by lighted streets, blue gods and quiet gods and bright-eyed gods, and even as they walk in transparent flesh the dust gently sinks back to the earth, and many a child in Kanthapura sits late into the night to see the crown of this god and that god, and how many a god has a chariots with steeds white as foam and queens so bright that the eyes shut themselves in fear lest they be blinded."

One night in the month of *Kartik* when it was so late that the Kartik lights had gone out, but when the day had not yet dawned, there was great commotion in Kannayya House. They thought that old Ramakrishnayya must have passed away that Kartik-night. But it was soon discovered that the police had come to arrest Moorthy. The police inspector Bade Khan, and a number of policeman were seen standing round Moorthy in Moorthy's room. Books, papers, charkhas and bundles of cotton were lying about in great disorder, and Moorthy's room was being searched. The Inspector was questioning Moorthy and writing something in a notebook.

Soon there was a large crowd. The Inspector then asked Bade Khan to bind Moorthy, and as they loosened their ropes to bind Moorthy, Rachanna came forward and asked them not to bind their master. When the police threatened to beat him, he shouted *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*, and the cry was taken by the crowd and repeated several times. At this a policeman uses his lathi on Rachanna, and the other policemen also came forward and use their lathis to disperse the crowd. Rachanna again shouts *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*, and the Inspector orders that he should also be arrested. Lathis are freely used on the crowd but the slogan-shouting continues. Then Moorthy addressed the crowd, advises it to remain peaceful and praised the Mahatma. As soon as he says, "*the Mahatma has often gone to jail*, the *Mahatma has often gone to jail*", the Inspector slaps him on the face. This enrages the crowd and the police is attacked. The result is that orders for a lathi charge are given, and men, women and children are mercilessly beaten. Women are roughly handled and dishonoured. In all seventeen others besides Moorthy are arrested and taken away to the Santur Police Station. The others are given a sound beating and released the other day, but Moorthy is taken to Karwar. The people are stunned ; they pray to God to help Moorthy.

A number of Advocates meet Moorthy in the lock-up and are eager to defend him in the law-court. A defence committee is formed, and a sufficiently large amount is collected to meet the expenses. But Moorthy does not like all this. They know that it is the Red-men's court and justice will not be done to him. But Moorthy refuses all help. Truth is on his side and Truth needs no advocate. The Mahatma has taught him that Truth is God, and he wants none to come between him and God. Advocate Sankar, who was the Secretary of the Karwar Congress Committee, alone appreciates Moorthy's stand, and on his suggestion Moorthy agrees to meetings being held for him.

So, the Congress Volunteers set to work. They go from Bazar to Bazar, telling the people that there would be a public meeting that evening in the Gandhi Maidan. A large meeting is thus organised and the atmosphere echoes with shouts of *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai.* A number of speeches are delivered about the noble qualities of Moorthy, about Hindu-Muslim Unity and the untouchables. An old man came and talked against the pollution of religion and the corruption of castes and of the great Hindu tradition. He was soon exposed as an agent of the Swami who himself was an agent of the Red government and he had been rewarded for his services with 20 acres of wet land. Advocate Ranganna who was the last to speak told the people, "Choose between a saint like Mahatma Gandhi who has given up land and lust and honours and comfort and has dedicated his life to the country, and these fattened brahmins who want to frighten us with their excommunications, once the Government has paid them well." At this the Police Inspector came and put him under arrest.

Immediately afterwards a procession was taken out and there were repeated shouts of, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai.* The police was already waiting near the Imperial Bank, and as the procession reached there it was violently dispersed. The people in Kanthapura came to know of all these happenings from the newspaper of Rangamma. They now realised that Bhatta also, whom they respected so much, was a government agent. That was why he was nowhere to be seen on the night of Moorthy's arrest. He was seen more and more in the company of Bade Khan. And he left for Kashi after the harvest.

Week after week passed and the people of Kanthapura followed eagerly all the details of the events that were taking place in Karwar. Their Moorthy, their master, was there in jail, and they could not rest in peace. Sometimes, youngmen like Seemu and Vasudev would go to Karwar and tell them all they had heard about Moorthy and his case. Rangamma became very impatient with this waiting. Finally, she and Nanjamma went down to Karwar themselves. Rangamma stayed during the harvest and only returned for the corn distribution. When she came back, she told us how it was. 'The police says it was Moorthy who arranged the attack. The attack of the Pariahs on the police.' The case was a clear one and nothing at all could be done. They all prayed to Kenchamma to deliver Moorthy to them soon. They promised many offerings if he was freed. But when Range Gowda was dismissed from his Patelship they prayed, 'Oh goddess, destroy this government'.

Rangamma went back to Karwar after the corn distribution. This time she stayed with Advocate Sankar, who was also the Secretary of the Karwar Congress Committee, so that she may help him in the correspondence and other work of the Congress. *In a long digression, running over several pages, we are given an elaborate account of the life, career and character of Sankar, an account which in no way furthers the action of the novel. It is entirely superfluous* *and can easily be omitted without in any way damaging the novel. As such, it cannot but be regarded as a serious artistic flaw. It only serves to build up the character of Sankar as a saintly lawyer who does not undertake false cases, and is, therefore, highly respected in Karwar.* He was a fanatic, inasmuch as he would not go to a marriage, if everyone there did not wear khadi. He organised a number of meetings, and in one of them Rangamma also delivered a short speech, about Moorthy.

Rangamma returned to the village for the Magh Cattle fair. Two days later they heard that the Red-man's judges had sentenced Moorthy to three months rigorous imprisonment. That day they were all sad and silent, and they all fasted.

Moorthy's imprisonment was a great tragedy. There was the death of old Rama Krishnayya who slipped and fell and died in the night. His body was cremated the next morning on the banks of the river. Suddenly the river swelled and the ashes were carried away by the water. So, Rangamma could not carry them to Kashi as she intended.

11. The Women's Volunteer Corps

Rama Krishnayya was dead, and now the problem was who would explain to them the Vedantic Texts and discuss philosophy with them. The problem was solved by Rangamma's offering to discuss and comment on them. The suggestion was welcomed by all, and they were all surprised to find that Rangamma could discuss philosophy so well. She seemed to have grown quite learned as a result of her stay in the city. Advocate Sankar must have taught her. She seemed also to have grown much stronger. When asked about the secret of her strength, she explained that she had practised Yoga under the guidance of her Guru Sadhu Narayan, and this has made her spiritually stronger. The women-folk were eager to practise Yoga, and Rangamma began to give them lessons.

It was also under her inspiration that they agreed to form a Women's Volunteer Corps or *Savika Sangha* as it was called. She inspired them to become Savikas by telling them stories of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi who fought the British so heroically, of the Rajput ladies who burnt themselves on the pyre rather than surrender to the enemy, and of Annie Beasant, Kamla Devi, and Sarojni Naidu. The result was they started taking regular training in the courtyard of Rangamma's house. Rangamma taught them not to neglect their household duties, and to remain absolutely non-violent if the police were ever to fall on them and beat them. Lathis and blows can effect only the body, but never the soul. She told them, 'Well, we shall fight the police for Kenchamma's sake, and if the rapture of devotion is in you, the lathi will grow as soft as butter and as supple as a silken thread, and you will hymn out the name of the Mahatma.' And we all grow dumb and mutter 'Yes, sister, yes'.

Seenu and Vasudev wanted to organise a similar volunteer corps for men, but the boys refused to come forward. They were feeling weak since Moorthy's arrest. They did not want to disturb the peace and quiet of their lives by becoming volunteers. They were afraid of the police, and that they, too, would be arrested and sent to jail. Therefore, instead of forming the men's volunteer corps, it was decided to begin bhajans in the temple. So the conch was once again sounded and all thronged to the temple .It was once again, as it used to be when Moorthy was with them.

12. Moorthy's Return

It was the month of *Vaisakh* when the rains come and people in Kanthapura plough the fields and sow the crops. We get a long poetic description of the coming of rains, the description may be superfluous but it is a fine piece of poetic prose bearing witness to Raja Rao's command over the resources of the English language : "The rains have come, the fine, fast-footing rains that skip over the bronze mountains, tipote the crags, and leaping into the valleys, go splashing and wind-swung, a winnowed pour, and the coconuts and the betel-nuts and the cardamom plants choke with it and hiss back. And there, there it comes over the Bebbur Hill and the Kanthur Hill and begins to paw upon the tiles, and the cattle come running home, their ears stretched back, and the drover lurches behind some bel-tree or pipal-tree, and people leave their rooms and rush to the courtyard, and turning towards the Kenchamma Temple, send forth a prayer, saying, 'There, there, the rains have come, Kenchamma ; may our houses be white as silver', and the lightning flashes and the thunder stirs the tiles, and children rush to the gutterslabs to sail paper boats down to Kashi." The rain has been humanised and with our mind's eye we see its march to Kanthapura.

They must plough the fields and sow the crop. But they must begin on the auspicious day and time, and the due ceremonies must be performed, and prayers offered to goddess Kenchamma. So the priest Rangappa is consulted and the most auspicious day is determined. They assemble in the temple, coconuts are broken, the godddess is garlanded, the bulls are whitewashed and garlanded and so all is ready for the ploughing of fields. Though Range Gowda was no longer the Patel, to the villagers he was still very much the Patel. and this year, too, he lead the ceremonies as in the past.

The time for Moorthy's release was near, and they wanted to give a grand welcome on his return to Kanthapura. When the sowing was on they read in Rangamma's blue paper that Moorthy was released, and that he would return on Tuesday evening by bus. There was great joy and enthusiasm. It was decided to set up a yellow arch of banana trunks and green mango leaves on Karwar Road, and welcome Moorthy there. But Waterfall Venkamma did not want that Moorthy should be given a hero's welcome. In order to spoil the welcome, she consulted the temple priest, and fixed up the marriage of his daughter Nanja for that very evening. All from the Brahmin quarter were invited to the marriage feast, and it was upto them to choose between the marriage gaiety and the feast, "and the feast for a polluted pig."

That was why there were so few Brahmins in the pandal to welcome Moorthy. People from the weavers' qnarter the Potters quarter and the Pariah quarter came in large numbers. Rangamma and Ratna and few other Brahmins, both men and women, were also there. They waited and waited for Moorthy. At every hoot and screach, they would jump up thinking that it was Moorthy's bus. Time passed, but Moorthy did not come. The atmosphere was tense with suspense and anxiety, and the suspense of the waiting people has been skilfully conveyed by the novelist, "and hearts began to beat, and yet we saw no Moorthy, and yet no Moorthy, and yet no Moorthy and yet not a hair of his head was seen, and we were silent as though in the sanctum at the camphor ceremony. Yet no Moorthy, and no Moorthy, and the bus had surely passed by the river, over the bridge and up the Santur valley, and Rangamma got so anxious that she sent Pariah Lingayya to run and see, and Pariah Lingayya ran and ran, and from the top of the road cried out, 'No no', and we all looked to this side and that and no Moorthy and no Seenu either was to be seen, and our hearts began to beat like drums, and Ratna said, 'I'll see if he's come by the mango grove,' and Ratna ran like a boy, and behind her ran young Chenna, and Chenna was followed by Cowherd Sidda.

The fact was that Moorthy had been brought by another route, and he was already in Rangamma's room. Soon they were informed of his arrival. They rushed to the house and found that the police had formed a cordon round it. All at once they shouted *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and *Vande Mataram*, and the shout is constantly repeated. At last they are advised by the Police Inspector to disperse quietly and not to create trouble. When Rangamma also advises them to do so, they return quietly to their homes.

Thus did Moorthy return home. The police left Kanthapura late in the night. But they left behind a young Bade Khan. He also stayed at the Skeffington Coffee Estate to keep company with the older Bade Khan. Moorthy was not much changed. He was, "as ever—as ever."

13. Don't Touch the Government Campaign

It was Moorthy who told the people of Kanthapura, that soon the call for action would come from the Karwar Congress and they will have to begin their "Don't touch the Government campaign". For the Mahatma was already on a pligrimage to Dandi beach with a small group of followers. He will prepare salt there, and thus break the salt law. They will fast and pray, pray and fast till the call for action comes.

Day after day messengers came from Karwar, and Moorthy kept them informed of the course of events. The Mahatma was moving ; at every village he was given a hero's welcome and more and more people were following him. Hundred and seventy Patels had resigned their jobs. Moorthy asked the people of Kanthapura to swear (*a*) to speak the truth (*b*) to spin their hundred yards of yarn every-day (*c*) not to practise untouchability, but to have absolute faith in the oneness of all, and (*d*) to have love in their hearts for all, and hatred for none. In this way they should prepare themselves for action, for their fight, for their, "Don't Touch the Government Campaign".

Then the news came that the Mahatma had reached Dandi, had prepared a handful of salt and carried it home ; thereafter people prepared cartloads of salt and carried it away. The result was that the government was compelled to take action. Gandhi was arrested, and along with him thousands of others were sent to jail. The news created great excitement and people were eager for action. Moorthy often talked to them, and prepared them to face police lathis and repression in a disciplined non-violent manner. They will have to wait till the call for action comes from Karwar. May be he would be arrested, then they should follow the man who becomes their leader after his arrest, and the next one after him, and so on. In this way in Kanthapura, as also in every other town and village of India, preparations were made for the great non-violent fight that lay ahead, before India could be free.

The entire atmosphere is tense with excitement. Such is the narrative art of Raja Rao that we see with our mind's eye all that happens, and partake in the emotions of the people. The entire drama of the freedom struggle is re-enacted and the emotional involvement of readers in secured.

14. Picketing at Boranna's Toddy Grove

At last the call for action came. The taxes were not to be paid. A parallel Government was established, and Range Gowda was appointed as the Patel, the people's Patel. If the Patel appointed by the government came, he was not to be recognised and no taxes were to be paid to him, even if their lands were attached. And then on Friday (after a few days) they must begin "Don't touch the Government Campaign". They must picket Boranna's Toddy Grove, for Toddy is an evil, a means of corrupting and exploiting the people. However, before the campaign begins they must purify themselves of all evil within them. They will not be soldier-at-arms but solider-saints. Moorthy addressed the people and asked, "You are all with us ?' and we cry out, "All All" and 'You shall harm no one ?' 'None None"—'You shall go to the end fearlessly ?'—'All All'—'And there shall be neither brahmin nor pariah ?' and the pariahs shout out, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and an uncontrollable emotion takes hold of us all, and Moorthy says, 'The Panchayat has decided that it shall be on Friday, the seventeenth, that we shall begin the fight', and

Pandit Venkaeshia says, 'Few days could be more auspicious', and we say, 'So only three days more', and Moorthy says, 'Till then pray, purify yourselves and pray, 'and we all cry out' "Narayan Narayan." In this way the people were prepared psychologically not in Kanthapura alone, but in every nook and corner of India.

On the appointed day, *i.e.* Friday, men, women and children, one hundred and thirty-nine people in all, began their march to Boranna's Toddy Grove. As they neared the Grove, they could see the policemen on all sides. Soon, the Police Inspector came upto them and warned them that they were forbidden to march to the Grove. It was against the law. Moorthy told him that he knew it, but he was following the instructions of the Congress, and he will continue to do so till death. They continued to move on, and as they reached the grove, a large number of carts came up, and the cartmen joined them.

Moorthy and Range Gowda opened the gates of the grove and suddenly Rachanna slipped in and shouting 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai' climbed a toddy tree. The police rushed at him and banged lathis on his legs. Amidst shouts of 'Vande Matram' and 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai', more and more people entered the grove and climbed the trees. The police rained blows after blows but to no avail. Twigs were broken and branches were cut. Even women and children bore the blows bravely. The novelist gives a graphic account of those tense moments in his usual inimitable rhythmic prose, "and we rush and we crawl, and swaying and bending and crouching and rising, we move on and on, and the lathis rain on us, and the cart men have come back again and they feel so angry that they, too, cry out 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai' and they, too, rush behind us and we feel a new force in us and we say we shall enter the toddy grove and tear out at least a toddy branch and brake at least a toddy-pot. And there are shrieks and shouts and cries and sobs, and the more we are beaten the more we get used to it and we say, 'After all it is not bad—after all it is not so bad', and our bangles break and our saris tear and yet we huddle and move on." Police men try to pull down the people who have climbed the trees. They slip down amidst loud laughter, and their discomfiture provides dramatic relief.

At last they are arrested, and carried in waiting lorries to the Santur Police Station. Rachanna, Lingayya and Siddayya are sent to the lock up, and others are taken away in three different directions in lorries and left at distant places to walk back on foot to Kanthapura. It is dark night and their way lies through a dangerous forest. But they continue to march back with hearts palpitating with fear. Then they come across some cartmen who give them a free lift. They reach Kanthapura where Rangamma's cousin Subbayya gives them a hero's welcome and entertains them with milk and food. Then they are escorted to Kanthapura like victorious heroes returning from a war : "And they gave us new carts, and beadles walked in front of us, lanterns in their hands, and before them walked Iron-shop Imam Khan, gun in hand and fire in his eyes, and our carts clattered and creaked through the dense, drowning night, by the Gold-mine Hill and Siva's Gorge and up the Menu Crag and down again to the valleys of the Himavathy, where lies Kanthapura curled like a child on its mother's lap.'

The next morning they planted their trophies before the temple gate. They were five twigs of toddy trees and a toddy-pot.

15. Satyagraha at the Toddy-Booth

Tuesday was the market-day in Kanthapura, and on this day the coolies were brought in large numbers to drink at Boranna's toddy booth near the gate of the Skeffington Coffee Estate. So, this day was selected for offering Satyagraha in front of the Toddy Booth, the purpose being to prevent the coolies from drinking. Such were the instructions from the Karwar Congress, and Moorthy was to carry them out.

So quite early in the morning the Satyagrahis, seventy-seven in all, finished their work quite early, and assembled in the temple. After the performance of due ceremonies, they began their march to the toddy booth. As they reached the fair, a large crowd followed them, and there were occasional shouts of *Vande Matram* and *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*. Moorthy was at the head with Ratna and Rangamma at his sides. Soon drops of rain began to fall at them and they said God was showering His blessings on them.

Soon they were outside the Skeffington Estate Gate, and close to the Toddy Booth. The police was already there in large numbers. The coolies were driven out of the Estate towards the booth by the foreman (*maistri*). They came moving in a line with their heads bowed down. Moorthy instructed the satyagrahis to squat before the toddy booth, and in this way to prevent the coolies from entering in. Soon it began to rain in torrents, and with the rain also came the shower of lathis and blows. The policemen were beating the coolies who had refused to walk over the satyagrahis. Then Boranna started shouting from the toddy booth that he would give the Brahmins a toddy offering free of cost and the crowd shouted back calling him a scorpion and a snake. The Police Inspector became furious and drove the crowd back with his cane. We wondered what would happen next because the police were still driving the coolies down towards us till they were pushing themselves over us. Rangamma suddenly shouted, '*Vande Mataram*, Lie down, brothers and sisters', and we all lay down. The coolies tried to stumble over us but we lay so close to each other that there wasn't an inch of spare ground. They couldn't move, and we held on to their hands and to their feet, and their dhotis and saris. The rain poured on. The police became nervous and they kicked our backs and our stomachs. The crowd yelled, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai, Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*. People banged kerosene tins, others rang bells. Some of the crowd ran towards us and lay down beside us. The Police Inspector rushed at the coolies and whipped them and pushed them and the other policemen caught hold of our hair and tried to pull us up. When Rangamma was pulled up, the Police Inspector gave her such a kick that she fainted. Moorthy shouted, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and such a blow gagged his mouth that he did't speak again. There was a lot of noise and at that the Police Inspector gave the order that the crowd to disperse. So the police charged the crowd. We heard screaming and crying and tents crashing down and vessels, bells and benches rolling.

While this was going on, we begged the coolies not to drink and some said, 'By Kenchamma's grace, we will not.' When the policemen saw this they became angry, left the market people and came back to us. They got pots and pans, filled them with water from the gutters and poured it on us. They lifted our sarees and poured water on our bodies, and they beat us. With all the beating we fell, one by one, on to the ground.

When the Satyagrahis came to their senses, they found themselves in a lorry. They were now only sixty-seven, for the remaining ten had been arrested and taken to jail. But they did not arrest Moorthy, and he was still with them. The next morning, they found that the Pariah street was full of new huts and new faces. This was so becuse three and thirty or even more coolies of the Skeffington Coffee Estate had come to live with them. And they all said, "The army of the Mahatma is an increasing garland."

The success of the Satyagraha at Baronna's Toddy Booth, encouraged people in the neighbouring villages to offer satyagrah at a number of other toddy booths, which were forced to close down one after another. In this way twenty-six booths were closed in the vicinity of Kanthapura. The fame of Moorthy spread, people came in large numbers to have his darshan and they said Kanthapura was lucky to have such a great man living in it.

The account of the Satyagraha shows Raja Rao at his most inspired. The lathi-charges, the beatings, the slogan shouting, the thrills and sensations, of those stirring days have been fully captured and vividly narrated. The entire drama is re-enacted, and we feel that we are living once again in those historic times, when the Mahatma did his Chrisma and brought a dead nation to life.

16. Government Repression

Those who were arrested during the Satyagraha at Baronna's Toddy Booth were released on the expiry of their term. On their return from jail, they were given a hero's welcome. They related harrowing tales of the beatings and tortures to which they were subjected in the prison. Seetharamu, for example, narrated how he was yoked like a bull and made to plough the field. He was whipped and made to work for long hours, even though he ran high temperature.

Not only were the freedom-fighters tortured in jails, but government repression was also intensified on the people of Kanthapura. A new Patel was appointed, and people were ordered to pay the revenue to him. Only a few paid their dues to him, the others refused to do so. Moorthy frankly warned them that soon they will come to attach their property, but if they remained firm they were sure to win. They dug the earth and buried their jwellery and other valuables. In this way, they prepared themselves for the coming events.

One heavy morning they discovered that all the roads and lanes leading to Kanthapura had been barricaded. Stone upon stones were piled on the road and tree upon tree was laid beside them, and canal-banks were dug and the water let through, and thorns were laid—where cactuses grew and earth was poured over it all, and one, two, three, four, five, six policemen stood behind them, bayonets and bugles in their hands, and for chief they had a tall white man. The Government action had begun.

In the afternoon there was much beating of drums. The new beadle announced that, if the revenue was not paid according to law, every man, woman and child in Kanthapura will have to pay a punitive tax of one rupee and three pice. The government was determined to rule the country and those who created trouble shall be sent to jail. During the night Moorthy, Rangamma and Ratna went from door to door telling the people that the fight had begun, and if any policeman entered the house they should ring the temple bell and at once they would come to their help. The entire atmosphere was tense, as the people waited through the night for the birth of events.

The next morning as they were sweeping the street-fronts they saw a long procession. It had an armed soldier at the head and another at the rear. In the middle, with one policeman to every two men, were the coolies who had left the Skeffington Estate to live in Kanthapura. They were being marched back to the Estate because the Sahib wanted them. They found out then that while they were all sound asleep the police had come and taken Moorthy and Rangamma away. Rangamma's house was locked up and guarded and no one could enter it. Many men had been taken away that night and their women tied up and gagged.

The whole village was full of policemen. Everywhere one turned there were policemen and policemen. The Pariah women and their children flowed into streets and stoned the policemen they picked a little boy up by his leg, turned him upside down and beat him so violently that when he threw the child down on the grass only blood and sobs came from his mouth. When the policemen saw the women watching, they chased them, threw stones at them and whipped and kicked them. One policeman got hold of Puttamma and we heard her shout, 'Ayoo, Ayoo'. Before we knew it the policeman was on her. They rushed to find help for her, but none could be found. Where were their men ? Seethamma rushed to her neighbour and the house was full of policemen. They caught her but she shrieked, tore herself free, and rushed to find a hiding-place.

'The best place to hide is the temple,' they thought ; so they ran that way. They could see Rangamma's house. There was an elephant on the verandah. The policemen were getting the elephant to push down the door. Up by the Temple corner there was a group of about twelve women being whipped and kicked by policemen. Among them was pregnant Radhamma. She was trying to run with the other women. Fortunately she saw them as they were passing by. They wanted to get her to a safe place. But she collapsed and twisted with pain. Her baby slipped out of her there and then, screaming and yelling, although she was only seven months gone. One of us tore the cord and put the child in her sari fringe. Just then we heard cries from the Post-Office-House. A few of us rushed off to see what it was about. As we entered the house, we heard Ratna's voice. She was on the kitchen floor, with her ankles tied together and her bodice all torn. The policeman was still there. When he saw them he turned and ran, slipping away over the wall. Ratna cried and hugged them and told them how she had scratched and bitten him and fallen on her stomach. One of them went back to fetch Radhamma and her baby. They all sat in the kitchen for a while to recover their breath.

When Ratna was up and washed, she said, 'Now sisters, this is no safe place to hide. Let's go to the temple.' They were just going out through the bath-room when Ratna shouted, 'Fire, fire, Bhatta's house is on fire. They knew the Pariah women must have set it alight. They could hear the heavy thumps of the elephant moving up the street and the shrieking of the Pariah women and their children. As they ran and then crawled at the back of the temple, they heard a terrific crash as Bhatta's verandah roof smashed to the ground. At last they were in the safety of the temple. There were more crashes from Bhatta's house, and the fire rose higher and higher as the rice granary caught the fire.

One of the women, Vedamma, had high fever and she trembled and moaned. Ratna decided to go out and bring blankets for her. But hardly had she crossed the temple, when a policeman saw her and ran after her. Ratna at once rushed in and closed the temple door and put in the bar, so that it may not be opened. The policemen beat and beat against the door for long but could not break in. Then they decided to seal it up so that none may go out. The result was that by the afternoon they were all hungry and thirsty. They waited eagerly for sounds of people coming to their help, but they could hear only the sound of soldier's boots, keeping watch outside the door. They 'lighted the sacred fire and recited bhajans so that the people may know that they were prisoners in the temple and come to their rescue, but none came. In order to pass the time as well as to encourage them, Ratna told them stories of the women of Bombay and of other big cities, and how bravely they were fighting the Red-men, shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk. They listened to the stories, dosed and snored, and sang bhajans, and in this way the night passed.

With day break, Rachanna's wife Rachi came and opened the door. She had heard their moaning and groaning through the night, and taking the key from the Patel's house had come to release them. They hurried back to their homes. The streets were deserted, and the police had left. They found that Puttamma was ill and wailing. They also discovered that all their menfolk had not been taken away by the police. Many of them had hidden themselves in the dense jungle bushes on the outskirts of the village and had watched from there all through the night. That was how Pariah Siddayya could come to the help of Puttamma when the policemen tried to dishonour her. It was a great comfort to them, and now they could sleep soundly.

17. The March Out of Kanthapura

Three days passed before any event worth-mentioning taking place. During this time they rested, put their houses in order, and took up the old routine.

Then on Saturday, they saw a number of cars coming up the Bebbur Mound, and a number of men in European clothes came out of them. These cars were closed cars. They were followed by open cars, bringing people looking like coolies. They knew that they were the city-coolies, and that their fields were soon to be auctioned. Soon there was beating of drums and the drummer announced that those who did not pay the taxes would be regarded as rebels, and their fields would be auctioned. A number of fields were named. The women were terrified. Satamma even denounced Moorthy and the Mahatma for bringing all that misery upon them. However, they pacified her and took her with them to Ratna to consult her, for she was the chief, their leader, since Moorthy had been arrested and was no longer with them. She lived in Sami's house for Rangamma's house had been sealed by the Government.

They met Ratna in Sami's house. A number of other women were already there. Ratna told them not to worry, for a number of city-boys would soon come to their help. One of the volunteers was already there and he said, "Sisters, there is nothing to be frightened about. We knew the Government would auction the lands today, and our men are going to come from the city, hundreds and hundreds of men are going to come from the city, for we have decided to hold a Satyanarayana Puja, and it will be held in this house, and our men will escape from all the policemen the Goverement can send and all the soldiers the Government can send, and yet men will come from the city, and they will come for the Satyanarayana Puja and no land will ever be sold, for the Government is afraid of us", and Nanjamma says, 'No, no'. But the volunteer goes on, "Yes, sister, yes, the government is afraid of us, for in Karwar the courts are closed and the banks closed and the Collector never goes out, and there are policemen at his door and at his gate and beneath his bedroom window, and every white man in Karwar has a policeman beside him, and shops are closed and bonfires lit, and khadi is the only thing that is sold, while processions and songs and flag-salutations go through the streets, picketings and prabhat pheris, and police will beat and the soldiers open fire, and millions and millions of our brothers and sisters be thrown into prison, and yet go and ask them, who is our King ? They will say, "Congress, Congress, Congress and the Mahatma," and hand in hand they go, shouting *Victory, victory to the Mahatma* and millions and and millions of our brothers and sisters have gone to prison, and when the father comes back, the son is taken, and when the daughter is arrested, the mother comes out of prison, and yet there is but one law our people will obey, it is the law of the Congress. Listen, the government is afraid of us. There is big city in the north called Peshawar, and there the government has always thousands and thousands of military men, and our brothers, the Mohammedans, one and all have conquered the city, and no white man will ever come into it. And they have conquered sisters, without a gun-shot, for they all are Satyagrahis and disciples of the Mahatma. They bared their breasts and marched towards the machine-guns, ten thousand in all, and bullets went through them, and a hundred and twenty-five were shot through and through, and yet they went up and conquered the city. And when our soldiers were sent to shoot them, they would not shoot them. For after all, sisters, these soldiers, too, are Indians, and men like us, and they, too, have wives and children and stomachs to fill as we.'

It was in this way that the people were inspired and encouraged, and it is in this way that the novelist gives us an idea of the impact of the Gandhi-movement during the late twenties. The people were growing fearless, their's was a non-violent struggle, and the greater the government repression the stronger was the resistence of the people. The suffering of the people was having its impact on the Indian Sahibs, touching their hearts, and making them disobey the government and give up their jobs.

It was decided that there would be *Satyanarayana Puja*, the god will be taken out in a procession, and under the cover of this procession they will go out of Kanthapura. There were policemen and white officers alround and for the success of their plan, great secrecy was necessary. So they pulled two carts across the front of Sami's courtyard, so no one could see what they were doing. As they were preparing for the procession people came to tell them that more bus loads of people were arriving for the auction. As dusk fell, big strong gas-lights were lit and carried to the fields. The coolies who had been brought from the city, set to work cutting the rice growing on the fields. Their rice was being taken and their fields were being occupied by strangers.

All was ready. Ratna blew the conch. We shouted *Satyanarayan Maharaj ki jai*. We lit the comphor, and broke the coconuts and our procession started. As we walked we sang and clapped our hands. From the village gate, lines of policemen, with their lathis raised, started walking towards us. When they saw it was a religious procession, they stopped. Every few hundred steps Ratna stopped and blew the conch three times. The camphors were relit and more coconuts were broken. *Satyanarayan Maharaj ki jai* rose in the night air. The Inspector stopped the procession and asked Ratna, "Where are you going ?" "Where the gods will", she replied. They marched on. But now the cry, *Vande Matram, Matram Vande* rose in their throats and from the darkness the reply, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* came from the dense jungle bushes where their men were hiding. The police were furious. They rushed at them but their men and all the other men who had come to help, the city boys, the volunteers, Mohammedans, peasants, all swarmed round them. It was they who received the lathi blows. Some of them cried, *Inquilab Zindabad* ! Inquilab Zindabad. They moved on towards the Skeffington Coffee Estate.

They kept marching towards the Skeffington Coffee Estate. They saw some shapes moving about on Bebbur Mound, and guessed they must be soldiers. The city boys kept up their spirits by telling them of what was happening in Peshawar and other cities of India, and how the police had refused to carry out the orders of the government.

As they shouted *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and *Inquilab Zindabad*, the police showered lathi blows on them, so that the procession throne and the god and the flowers fell down. Then someone suddenly hoised the tri-colour flag from the top of a pipal tree, and sang out loudly.

Lift the flag high
O, Lift the flag high,
Brothers, sisters, friends and mothers,
This is the flag of the Revolution,

and the police rush at him, and he slips in here and he slips out there and the boys have taken the flag, and the flag flutters and leaps from hand to hand, and with it the song is clapped out :

O lift the flag high,
Lift it high like in 1857 against,
And the Lakshmi of Jhansi,
And the Moghul of Delhi,
Will be ours again.

and there is a long cry, 'Down the hedge, here', and we rush down the Aloe lane, and the police find they are too few, and they being to throw stones at the crowd and the crowd gets angry, but the boys shut them up and sing :

O fire, O soul,
Give us the spark of God-eternal,
That friend to friend and friend to foe,
One shall stand before HIM.

Through a gap in the hedge they see their fields lying below and the city coolies reaping the harvest by gas-light. They run down the lane and the field bunds, and reach the canal. With terror in their hearts, they wade through the canal, when suddenly on the opposite bank they see a large number of soldiers with bayonets in their hands. They turn round with shrieks and cry of fear, and jump into the harvest to hide themselves. It is now that the first shot is fired. However, it is fired into the air as a warning and no one is hurt. The terror striken crowd rushed this way and that way, and an idea of the fear that had gripped their hearts is given by the novelist in his usual picturesque style, "we all groaned and shrieked and sobbed, and we rushed this side to the canal-bund and that side to the coconut-garden, and this side to the sugar-cane field and that side to the Bel-field bund, and we fell and we rose, and we crouched and we rose, and we ducked beneath the rice harvests and we rose, and we fell over stones and we rose again, over field-bunds and canal-bunds and garden-bunds did we rush, and the children held to our saris and some held to our breasts and the night-blind held to our hands ; and we could hear the splash of the canal water and the trundling of the gun-carts, and from behind a tree or stone or bund, we could see before us, there, beneath the Bebbur Mound, the white city boys grouped like a plantain grove, and women round them and behind them, and the flag still flying over them. We see the entire scene with our mind's eyes. It is in this way that the novelist conveys to us an idea of the thrills and sensations of those stirring times when the soul of an oppressed nation was fired by the call of the Mahatma, and thousands sacrificed themselves for the sake of the motherland.

The soldiers were enraged by their repeated shouts of *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*, and they were ordered to disperse, or there would be firing. On their refusing to do so, a shower of bullets was fired. This time also it was false firing and nobody was hurt. They kept on moving. There was a veritable moving round of them from the Bebbur field to the canal field. They run into the Bhatta's sugar-cane fields, and under cover of sugar-canes continue moving towards the coolies who are still reaping the harvest. The nearer they reached the coolies the louder they shouted, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and *Inquilab Zindabad*. Suddenly they see crowds of people moving in the Skeffington Coffee Estate, and soon the Congress flag is hoisted, and their shouts are returned by them. They are the coolies of the Skeffington Coffee Estate. The throw down the berricades and loudly shout out, "Vande Mataram" etc. The city-coolies look at them and at once stop work. The lights are all put out. The Skeffington coolies continue to march towards them shouting slogans. They are ordered by a white officer on horse back to stop. On their refusal to do so shots after shots are fired and cries, groans and lamentations resound in the air. They run forward, and the police can stop them no more, and they jump over field-bounds and tumble against gas-lights and fall over rocks and sheafs, sickles, and scythes, three thousand men in all, and from the top of the Mound soldiers open fire.

Then there is a long silence, and them yells and moans and groans again. Then the women-folk, go up behind the crowd, and the bullets scream through the air, "like flying snakes taken fire'. One of them, Vedamma, is hurt in the leg, and there are more cries and lamentations. The Congress ambulance car is already there, and first aid is rendered on the spot, and the wounded are taken away. The courage and determination of the volunteers, the lamentations and groans of the wounded, their repeated shouts of *Vande Matram* move even the city-coolies in the fields, and they take up their shout, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*.

In order to convey the full sensation and thrill of those days of lathi-charges and satyagrahs, the novelist describes the scene thus, "Then suddenly, from the Himavathy bend there is such a rush of more coolies that the soldiers do not know which way to run, for the city boys are still marching up, and women are behind them, and the crowd behind the women, and there are the coolies across the barricades ; and there is such joy that a wild cry of *vande......* *Mataram*'......gushes from the valley to the mountain-tops and all the moon-lit sky above us. And the white man shouts a command and all the soldiers open fire and all the soldiers charge—they come rushing towards us, their turbans trembling and their bayonets shining under the bright moon, and our men lie flat on the fields, the city boys and the women, and the soldiers dash upon us and trample over us, and bang their rifle-butts agains our heads. There are cries and shrieks and moans and groans, and men fly to the left and to the right, and they howl and they yell and they fall and they rise and we rise, too, to fly, but the soldiers have seen us, and one of them rushes toward us, and we are felled and twisted, we are felled and we are kicked, we are felled and the bayonets waved over our faces—and a long time passes before we wake and we find Satamma fainted beside us, and Radamma and I, who were soaking in a ditch, crawl past her. And then there is a shot, and a fleeing man near by is shot in the chest and he falls over us, and the moon splashes on his moustached face, his peasant-blanket soaked in blood, and he slowly lets down his head, crying 'Amma, mother Amm-Amm' and we wipe the saliva from his mouth, and we put out mouths to his ear and say, *Narayan*, *Narayan*, but he is already dead. There is no more charging now, but a continuous firing comes down from the Bebbur Mound. The moon still shines and with it the winking lights of the Skeffington Coffee Estate.

They lay hidden in the fields, large numbers of them. They could see the white officers and the soldiers moving about. They were holding consultations, and it was clear soon there will be an attack. Then suddenly someone broke a gas-light. There was a loud roar, the white officer thought a shot had been fired, and so at once an attack was ordered. They charged on them and bullets after bullets were showered. The coolies rushed towards the Bebbur Mound where someone had suddenly hoisted the national flag. The soldier, fiercer than before, dashed after them. The city-boys hold each others hands and form a cordon round them. As they talked with the white-officer, they, the women-folk, waded through the canal.

One of the boys shouted, 'Brother, we are non-violent. Do not fire on innocent men.' The white officer shouted, 'Stop. What does he say ?' A soldier laughed and said, 'They say, they are innocent.' 'Then ask them if they will be loyal to the government', said the officer. The city boy asked, 'Which government ?' The officer answered, 'The British government'. But the boy said, 'We only know one government, and that is the government of the Mahatma'. The officer then replied, 'But ours is an Indian government.' The officer then said to a soldier, "Plant this flag here' and to the city boys he said, 'Salute the flag and you will be free'. The boys shouted, *Inquilab Zindabad* as an answer to the officer. Suddenly, as the boys started running to the planted flag, the soldiers thrust their bayonets at them and the officer shot them with his pistol. Hand to hand fighting broke out now. We could hear moans and groans as we lay behind the bund, on the other side of the canal. We saw men tied up and rolled into the canal and we watched the soldiers bayoneting the coolies and the city boys.

The bloody-battle continued in the fields, but they, the women, reached the village-gate. There were gathered a large number of people, even, women and children. They saw line after line of wounded and bleeding people being carried on stretchers. Many of the people they knew, and their women were wailing and crying. Then Rachi, Rachanna's wife, could bear it no longer, and said that she would set fire to the village. She and some other Pariah women took off their saris and bodices, made a bonfire, and lighted one thatch after another. In this way granaries, byres and houses were burnt. As the flames rise high, there are shots again, and the soldiers rush towards them. They run and run and dodge the soldiers. More and more men, women and children joined them, till there were thirty of them. They trudged towards the Maddur Mountains, and reached there in about an hour. The people of Maddur welcomed them, and gave them food and drink. Having rested a little while they moved on, for the police was after them. They reached the banks of the Convery, and soon crossed over to the state of Mysore on the other side. They were given a hero's welome by the people. They were garlanded and called, *the pilgrims of the Mahatma*. It was the village of Kashipur, and they decided to settle there.

18. Kashipur

One year and two months passed-by, and the thirty refugees from Kanthapura were comfortably settled in their new houses. Their life was much the same as in Kanthapura. In the afternoon, they all gather in the Verandah, religious books are read and discussed, just as in Kanthapura. But they remembered the past, and their hearts were sad, for many of their friends were missing. Some were in jail, and they waited for their release. Ratna had got only one year, and she was the first to come to them. She told them how they had been tortured in jail for refusing to salute the Union Jack. She also told them that the Mahatma had come to terms with the Viceroy, and the freedom struggle had been suspended. There was peace for the time being. But things could never be as they were before, for they had suffered terribly, and lost their near and dear ones.

As a result of the pact with the Viceroy, Moorthy was also released from jail. She received a letter from him, in which he told her of Jawahar Lal Nehru, and how the youth all over the country followed him. They were sure Jawahar Lal would change things, remove poverty, and make them all equals. In this way, the novelist has given us an idea how Nehru was rising on the political scene of India, and already attracting the masses of India. He was with Gandhi, he also believed in non-violence, but also he had his individuality, and his own views. He was like Bharatha to the Mahatma.

Then Ratna left for Bombay. Despite some change in Moorthy's views, they were all for the Mahatma. Then they heard that the Mahatma was going to the Red-man's country, and they sure he would bring Swaraj for them. Raja Rao's mythopoic imagination is seen at work when he writes, "They say the Mahatma will go to the Red-man's country and he will get us Swaraj. He will bring us Swaraj, the Mahamta. And we shall all be happy. And Rama will come back from exile, and Sita will be with him, for Ravana will be slain and Sita freed, and he will come back with Sita on his right in a chariot of the air, and brother Bharatha will go to meet them with the worshipped sandal of the Master on his head. And as they enter Ayodhya there will be a rain of flowers".

It was only Patel Range Gowda who visited Kanthapura on his release from jail. He went to the village to dig out his Jewels which he had buried there. He told them that everything was changed in the village. New houses had been built on the hills around for the city-coolies, but the village itself was in ruins. Even Bhatta had sold his house and gone away. Their own houses were all in ruins.

Range Gowda had grown very lean and thin, so that it was even difficult to recognise him. He, too, settled in Kashipur and lived with them.

of argument with Hum-
But he's into winning
s — whereas I'm into
ings done!

decision. Which is to
rveillance. It's a mat-
ciple.

ered by informing me
a Home Office mat-

ce we'd been

ernment surveillance? That will shake him. And it will bring the matter out into the open. We'll see if it's just a Home Office matter! I think not!

Finally, I asked Bernard to make an appointment for me to meet Walter Fowler of the Express for a quick drink in Annie's Bar at the House, later this week.

"What for?" Bernard wanted to know.

"First law of political indiscre-

dence,
true.

Suggestec

1.	C.D. Narasimhaiah	: Raja Rao
2.	Paul Verghese	: Indians Writing
3.	M.K. Naik	: Raja Rao (Tway Authors Series)
4.	Uma Parameswarm	: A Study of Repr Indo-English No
5.	K.K. Sharma (ed)	: Indo-English Lit Collection of Cri
6.	Somerset Maugham	: The World's Ten
7.	Srinivasa Iyengar	: Indians Writing
8.	C. Paul Verghese	: Problems of the Writer in English
9.	C.D. Narasimhaiah	: The Swan and the
10.	Meenakshi Mukherji	: The Twice Born
11.	M.K. Naik (ed)	: Critical Essays Writing in English
12.	Dorothy Spencer	: Indian Fiction in E

THE TIMES OF INDIA, SUNDAY,

P... is my

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ugged...?

"You can't trust ministers," he said bluntly ... "min servants, are selected completely at random — by whim, in recognition of doubtful favours received, or ing someone of real ability who might become a thre of course, Minister. You can certainly be trusted. Yo a civil servant yourself !".

ed. You might almost be a civil servant yourself."

I was mollified. I didn't think he was bullshitting.

I let him continue. "Minister, would you trust every one of your cabinet colleagues never to [illegible] a confidence?"

I couldn't really give an answer [illegible] that, without appearing [illegible] disloyal to my cabinet [illegible]

[illegible] about all the [illegible]

[illegible] was an easy one. "You [illegible] trust me for [illegible]

gentle but firmly, "I propose that we shall have a select committee of both Houses chaired by a law lord to decide on every application. And no surveillance will be allowed to go on for more than two weeks without reapply- ing."

Then I told him to set the wheels in motion.

He argued no further, but took his leave of me in a very frosty manner.

I was full of [illegible] today. After [illegible] had [illegible] out I told Bernard to send a minute to each member of the cabinet.